

'Most of the people who beat up journalists are either corrupt officials and their subordinates or other rule violators. They are the correct targets for journalists.'

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'Our customers are mainly young people who aren't afraid to express their personalities.'

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Cheap, easy and filling, jiaozi are China's ultimate bachelor food.

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BEIJING TODAY

FRIDAY JANUARY 30 2004

NO. 139

CN11-0120

HTTP://BJTODAY.YNET.COM

By Deng Jianyong/Zhang Yan/Hou Mingxin

In May last year, a diary providing an insider's view of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, also known as the Tokyo War Crimes Trial was unearthed. The diary belonged to Mei Ruao, the Chinese judge on the tribunal, which ran from May 1946 to November 1948.

In his previously unpublished diary, Mei recorded his thoughts about the daily proceedings of the war crimes trial.

Following the discovery of the diary by Mei's son, Mei Xiaoo, reporters from CCTV interviewed some of the surviving participants in the trial and are currently preparing to publish the diary.

China's representatives

On August 15, 1945, Japan announced its unconditional surrender, ending World War II. On January 1946, the allied powers issued a special proclamation announcing the establishment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East to try the leaders of the Japanese military for crimes against humanity committed during the war.

The trial was held in Tokyo, with a tribunal team made up of judges and prosecutors from the 11 allied nations: Australia, Canada, China, France, Great Britain, India, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the Philippines, the Soviet Union and the United States of America.

The Chinese judge and prosecutor were Mei Ruao (Mei Ju-ao) and Xiang Zhejun (Hsiang Che-Chun).

Mei, born in Nanchang, Jiangxi Province in 1904, was educated at Stanford University and Chicago University in America. After returning to China, he taught at Shanxi University, Nankai University and Central School of Politics, and was later appointed a member of the legislative committee.

Xiang was born in Ningxiang, Hunan Province in 1896. He graduated from Yale and George Washington University majoring in law and in 1925 returned to China. Before his appointment as prosecutor of the international tribunal, Xiang was chief prosecutor of the Shanghai High Court.

As Mei recorded in his diary, the number of representatives sent by China to the tribunal was much smaller than that from most other allied countries, despite China having suffered so heavily at the hands of the Japanese.

Other Chinese representatives involved in the trial included the following.

Ni Zhengyu, Xiang's assistant, who received his doctoral degree from Stanford University in 1930.

Qiu Shaoheng, Xiang's secretary, previously an attorney in Shanghai.

Gao Wenbin, a graduate of the Law School of Dongwu University in 1945.

Zhou Xiqing, a graduate of Pennsylvania University, majoring in economics.

Judge Mei arrived in Japan in March of 1946. One of his dia-

ry entries records his feelings at that time: "I looked at the scene along the road and the faces of the Japanese men and women. Tokyo and Yokohama are totally ruined, they are unrecognizable from what I saw when I was here 22 years ago. Who changed them? The war criminals facing trial should be held responsible for all of this! They not only bought the world into disorder and inflicted untold damage on China, they also buried the future of their own country."

A conflict before the trial

On May 2, 1946, one day before the trial was due to begin, the tribunal held a rehearsal, during which a conflict arose between Mei and the president of the court, Australian judge William Webb.

The cause of the conflict was the proposed seating arrangement of the judges. Webb wanted American and British judges to sit beside him, while Mei argued that the seating arrangement should correspond with the order of the 11 allied countries' signatures on Japan's Instrument of Surrender. Accordingly, Mei should sit on Webb's left and Myron Kramer, the American judge, on his right.

When the judges gathered for the planned rehearsal, Webb insisted that the seating arrangement would follow his original plan, which he said had been approved by General Douglas MacArthur, the chief commander of the allied forces in Japan.

In objection to what he described in his diary as an "absurd arrangement," Mei removed his judicial robes and returned to his office.

Webb subsequently explained to Mei that the arrangement was simply designed to facilitate the carrying out of the trial, as the American and British judges were more familiar with the western justice system, and that there was no question of discrimination.

Mei's response was, "This is an international court, not an American or British court. I can see no necessity for such an arrangement. China has suffered from Japan aggression for more than 50 years and made unimaginable sacrifices during the war. I cannot accept that China's status in this court should be lower than that of Britain. I do not believe that my government will accept this arrangement."

Webb asked Mei not leave and then went to consult with other judges. Ten minutes later, he returned and told Mei that the rehearsal was just a provisional and unofficial arrangement, and that the judges had agreed to discuss again the seating arrangement that evening. He then urged Mei to participate in the rehearsal.

Mei said, "Photographers and journalists were all waiting in the court. They will take photos and publish reports. So, I will definitely not participate in the rehearsal. As for myself, I will

Sitting in Judgement

Diary sheds light on Tokyo War Crimes Trial



The judges: Back Row (Left to Right): Radhabinod Pal, B.V.A. Roling, Edward Stuart McDougall, Henri Bernard, Harvey Northcroft, and Delfin Jaranilla. Front Row (Left to Right): Lord Patrick, Major-General Cramer, William Webb, Mei Ruao, and Major-General I.M. Zaryanov.



The Japanese accused of war crimes.

Photos by Google.com

reconsider my responsibility. If I can not get support from my government, I will resign."

Because of his insistence, the rehearsal had to be deferred and at last Webb agreed to Mei's demand.

On May 3, the tribunal opened, and the 28 Japanese on trial for war criminals were brought into the court. That day, Mei wrote in his diary, "Facing the group of war criminals, I felt extremely angry. It was these people that had trampled China for decades, millions of my compatriots were killed by them. My anger is my compatriots' anger. Today, my place here in the court is the price of the death of my compatriots. I should be careful and I should be serious."

Seeking evidence

On February 7, 1946, Xiang Zhejun and his assistants arrived in Tokyo with a list of people the Chinese government wanted put on trial. There were 11 names on the list, including former Japanese prime minister General Tojo Hideki, war minister General Itagaki Seishiro, commander-in-chief of Japan's China Central Area Army General Matsui Iwane and General Doihara Kenji.

However apart from this list, the Chinese delegates brought

with them very little evidence to support the charges. As Qiu Shaoheng later told CCTV, "When we arrived in Tokyo, we did not bring anything. At that time, it seemed that the Nanjing Government (the then central government) knew nothing about the trial. They provided no instructions to us, let alone materials."

Professor Song Zhiyong of Nankai University told CCTV, "Why was it difficult to seek evidence? First, Japan did a very good job of covering up all those secrets from the war. Second, after they surrendered, a large quantity of evidence was deliberately destroyed. Third, China failed to keep adequate records and did not seek out related evidence during the war."

In order to find evidence and witnesses, Xiang and his assistants returned to China during the trial numerous times. The chief prosecutor, American Joseph Keenan, not only provided some funding for these trips, but also accompanied Xiang on several occasions to assist in gathering evidence.

Aixinjueluo Puyi, the last Emperor of China was one of the witnesses presented by China. Puyi ascended to the throne in 1908 and was deposed in 1911 when the Qing Dynasty fell. On March 1,

1931, he was installed by the Japanese as the emperor of the puppet state of Manchukuo.

Puyi appeared before the tribunal on August 16, 1946. The event was described in Japanese media as a "historic day," as Puyi was the first former emperor to appear before the court as a witness.

Puyi provided testimony for eight consecutive days, the longest provided by a witness at the tribunal. His testimony revealed Japan's intent to commit aggression in and divide northeastern China.

The tribunal began the Nanjing Atrocities phase in September 1946, for which the prosecution provided much powerful evidence. Eventually, 11 people, including five Chinese survivors, took the witness stand and a further 21 people filed affidavits.

"It was at this moment that the majority of the Japanese populace first heard about the inconceivable scale and dimension of the Rape of Nanjing. The horrible acts of the Japanese Army were revealed to the people for the first time," recalled Gao Wenbin.

However, the trial of Kenji Doihara and Itagaki Seishiro did not proceed smoothly.

Kenji Doihara, was a Japa-

nese spy acting in northeastern China during the war. He was one of the main plotters of the so-called Mukden Incident in 1931, which served as an excuse for the Japanese invasion of northeastern China, and was nicknamed "Lawrence of Japan," a reference to Lawrence of Arabia.

Itagaki Seishiro, the war minister, was another one behind the Mukden Incident. Both had been carefully to ensure no incriminating documents survived and Kenji refused to answer any questions during the trial.

After failing to find evidence in China, Chinese prosecutors asked permission to search the archives of the former Japanese Army. Although countless documents had been destroyed, they still found powerful evidences proving Seishiro and Doihara's crimes in China.

In the court, Ni Zhengyu, representing Chinese prosecution team, questioned Seishiro for ten days, impressing all present with his fluent English, legal knowledge and debating skills.

(Continued on page 2)

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Law Experts Help Improve Legislation

By James Liu

China's lawmakers have begun engaging legal experts as legislative assistants in an effort to improve their work.

Li Shouting, doctor of law at Southwest China University of Political Science and Law, has been engaged as a private legislative assistant to Cheng Yiju, deputy director of the Standing Committee of Chongqing Municipal People's Congress.

His short-term tasks include offering suggestions on Cheng's proposals

to the second session of the 10th National People's Congress, due to be held in March, and researching the local investment environment and foreign trade situation.

Li is not only the first private legal assistant in Chongqing Municipal People's Congress, but also the first in China's provincial-level people's congresses.

Ma Huaide, president of law school of the Chinese University of Political Science and Law, said that most lawmakers hold two or more posts concurrently, leaving them insufficient time and energy

for legislative work in an interview with *China Youth Daily*.

"However, turning all lawmakers into full-time professionals is impossible at the moment. Employing legislative assistants seems a very pragmatic way to improve legislative quality," Ma said.

The Standing Committee of Chongqing Municipal People's Congress has passed a decision to allow each member to have one legislative assistant according to his or her needs.

Under the decision, legislative assistants in Chongqing Municipal People's

Congress are not required to be full-time professionals. They may be students, professors or lawyers with a master's or higher degree in law.

Legislative assistants will offer legal consultation and do preparatory work for lawmakers, receiving an allowance of up to 8,000 yuan.

An official with the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress said the move showed that the country's lawmaking work had become more specialized and professional and its legislative authorities more authoritative.

Public Security Review

Beijing's 110 police hotline received 54 percent fewer calls during the Spring Festival holiday week than the preceding week, and 93 criminal suspects were apprehended as a result of calls.

Police warned people to take special care of their credit cards and bank pass-books, as there had been many recent cases of theft and fraudulent use of such items. Anyone who loses their credit card or pass-book should report the loss immediately to their bank, most of which have 24-hour hotlines for this purpose (Bank of China - 95566, Construction Bank - 95533, Commercial Bank - 96169).

Police also warned people to be wary of exchanging renminbi for foreign currency with strangers, and to take care of their belongings at all times.

(Information provided by Beijing Public Security Bureau)

China Suspends Poultry Exports, Imports

China has decided to suspend the export of poultry and related products by Chinese farmers from bird flu-hit areas and halt fowl imports from eight bird flu-affected countries, the Ministry of Commerce said Thursday.

So far, confirmed and suspected bird flu cases have been reported in parts of China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region bordering Vietnam, and Hunan and Hubei provinces in central China.

The ministry issued an announcement Wednesday jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture, General Administration of Customs and State Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine, prohibiting the export of poultry products from China's bird flu-hit areas beginning Wednesday.

According to the announcement, poultry imports were also banned beginning Wednesday from the Republic

of Korea, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, Pakistan and Indonesia, where deadly bird flu cases have been reported.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed avian influenza cases in Cambodia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Vietnam and China. The disease has caused human deaths in Thailand and Vietnam. However, the virus has not jumped to human beings in China yet,

according to Chinese official sources.

Agriculture and health ministers from China, Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, the European Union and the United States, and officials from the WHO and UN Food and Agricultural Organization attended a meeting on bird flu Wednesday in Bangkok of Thailand to discuss measures to fight the disease.

(Xinhua)

Draft Rules Issued on Auto Loans

By Hou Mingxin

The People's Bank of China, China's central bank, issued a draft regulation on auto loans last Tuesday.

Under the new regulation, loan periods are restricted to five years, with a maximum outlay of 80 per cent of the car's price, excluding taxes and insurance, according to a posting on the bank's website.

The regulation also provides guidelines for personal auto loans, distributor auto loans, group auto loans and risk management.

Last month, General Motors (US), Toyota Motors (Japan) and Volkswagen AG (Germany) got the nod from the China Banking Regulatory Commission to start offering car loans.

The three car makers are expected to set up auto-financing operations in China within the next six months, the commission said.

According to a government report issued by the State Development and Reform Commission, auto loans are forecast to increase by 80 billion yuan in 2003, up 71.6 billion yuan year-on-year from last year.

Over 100 billion yuan in loans were issued in 2002, according to state estimates, with China's big four banks - China Construction Bank, Bank of China, Industrial and Commercial Bank of China and Agricultural Bank of China, controlling 90 per cent of the market.



Epidemic prevention worker sprays disinfectant on a car passing through Dengjiapu, Hunan Province, where ducks at a duck farm were confirmed on January 21 to have the chicken flu virus. The local government has slaughtered all the poultry within a three kilometer radius of the farm and vaccinated all poultry in a further two kilometer radius.

Photo by Xinhua

Tax Concessions to Increase Income of Peasants

By Zhang Bo

The State Administration of Taxation (SAT) publicized five preferential taxation policies aimed at further relieving the burden of peasants on January 20.

According to the new policies, income from planting, breeding and fishing are exempt from personal income tax; income from the sale of one's own produce are exempt from personal income

tax; sales of produce amounting to less than 5,000 yuan per month or 200 yuan per day are free from value-added tax; tax is no longer payable on agricultural specialties; fluid vendors in rural areas are no longer required to transact tax registration.

An official from the SAT said the policies were specially instituted to carry out the State Council's policies to increasing

peasants' income.

The SAT also demands that taxation administrations at all levels should strictly enforce the above measures and should not collect personal income tax from sales of own produce in agricultural produce markets.

The SAT also emphasized that taxation organs should transact affairs transparently and justly.

Muto Akira and Kimura Heitaro.

Following the conclusion of the trial, Mei was appointed minister of justice by the Kuomintang government, however he refused the post. In December 1949, Mei returned to the People's Republic of China. He died in Beijing in 1972.

Xiang Zhejun refused the post of chief prosecutor offered by the Kuomintang government and returned to Shanghai to teach. He passed away in 1978.

Ni Zhengyu also returned to Shanghai and became a professor. In 1956, he was appointed state diplomatic advisor. In 1985, he was appointed to the Hague tribunal. Ni passed away in September last year.

(Continued from page 1)

Call for death

In April 1948, the trial, which had lasted for more than two years, came to an end. The 11 tribunal judges then started considering their verdicts and sentences, however a unanimous opinion on the death sentence proved elusive.

The Chinese government sent Mei a telegraph instructing him to seek the death sentence for Seishiro, Doihara and seven others.

Some of the judges, however, opposed the death sentence. According to Mei's diary, president of the court Justice Webb came up with a very strange pro-

posal, he suggested all the defendants be sent to an isolated island, just as France had exiled Napoleon.

American judge Major General Myron Kramer had no qualms about the death sentence, but his concern was only with those responsible for launching the Pacific War and for the ill-treatment of American prisoners of war.

Justice Radhabinod Pal of India argued that individuals should not be held responsible for a nation's action, and called for all the defendants to be released; Justice Henri Bernard of France and Major General I. M. Zaryanov of the Soviet Union judges also opposed sentencing death, on the

grounds that their nations had abolished the death sentence.

In order to see that the war criminals were punished, Mei tried to win over all the judges who held a different view. He believed that not punishing such criminal action would amount to silent connivance, and the tragedy would be destined to happen again. "In the week before the verdicts were handed down, I could not sleep," Mei wrote later.

On November 12 1948, the president of the court William Webb announced that seven defendants had been sentenced to death by hanging, namely Itagaki Seishiro, Kenji Doihara, Tojo Hideki, Matsui Iwane, Hirota Koki,

Online Tax Payments Launched in Beijing

China's first online tax payment system has been launched for a trial run in Beijing, enabling businesses and individuals to pay taxes via the Internet, the Beijing Local Taxation Bureau has announced.

"Once the system is in full operation and covers the entire city, tax payments can be made not only at taxation offices and banks, but also from the taxpayer's home or office," said Wang Jiping, director of the Beijing Local Taxation Bureau.

"Taxpayers can submit tax forms and documents via the Internet and thus spare themselves the trouble of going to taxation offices personally," Wang added. "This also saves staff at taxation offices from repetitive work and raises efficiency."

Taxation institutions that have introduced the online taxpayment system include the Haidian Branch, Chongwen Branch, West Railway Station Branch and Foreigners' Service Branch of the Beijing Local Taxation Bureau, as well as the Beijing branches of China Merchants Bank. (Xinhua)

Tobacco Market Opened

By Zhang Bo

China is to abolish the special tobacco monopolized sales certificate, which entitled holders to deal in foreign cigarettes, according to a Xinhua report on Sunday.

The move is expected to open up the cigarette retail sales market significantly, and is in line with agreements signed by China on entering the WTO.

According to Jiang Chengkang, director of the State Tobacco Monopoly Administration, all foreign trade and economic cooperation related to cigarettes and tobacco fall under the comprehensive control of the administration.

The administrative will also strengthen its supervision of promotion of cigarettes and cigarette distribution channels, specifically targeting cigarette smuggling and faking of trademarks.

No Holiday Pay for Senior Managers in Beijing

By Zhang Bo

Senior managers in Beijing will not receive holiday payments for overtime work. This was revealed by Beijing Labor and Social Security Bureau during an on-line explanation on Beijing's regulations on wage payments implemented from January 22, according to last Friday's *Beijing Star Daily*.

As senior managers enjoy high latitude to arrange their work time, overtime payments do not apply to them, according to the bureau.

Local regulations state that the system of unfixed work time is an elastic arrangement established by production characteristics and special wording demands of enterprises.

Officials from the bureau also reiterated that the first and second day of the lunar calendar are legal holidays and staff required to work on those days should be paid holiday compensation.

The newly implemented regulations also stipulate that employees off work due to illness shall be paid no less than 80 percent of the minimum salary in Beijing.

HK Okays Mainland Bank Cards

By James Liu

Starting from January 18, mainland Renminbi bank cards will officially be accepted in Hong Kong according to a statement released on January 16 by the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank.

Bank cards, which carry China Unionpay signs, will be allowed to withdraw Hong Kong dollars in cash. A daily maximum of 5,000 yuan can be drawn from ATM's throughout Hong Kong with the same Unionpay signs. Commission on each transaction is 15 yuan.

Central bank authorities noted that this move will facilitate greater spending by mainland travelers to Hong Kong while bringing closer both trade and tourism exchanges between the special administrative region and the mainland. Prior to this measure tak-

ing effect, mainland tourists could not take over US\$ 6,000 into Hong Kong as per customs regulations.

By 11 pm on January 18, a total of 1,572 transactions had been completed using mainland bank cards (a settlement volume of 756,941.20 Hong Kong dollars). Of this, 302,200 Hong Kong dollars were withdrawn from ATMs and 454,741.20 dollars were spent.

An official of China Unionpay Co. Ltd. (CUP), the only national payment network used by China's major banks, said the cards can be used in about 4,000 businesses in Hong Kong, including: major shopping malls, specialty shops and beauty parlors. CUP is a joint-stock financial organization founded by over 80 mainland financial companies, banks and foundations.



Unionpay system mainland bank cards can now get cash from ATM's in Hong Kong.

Shrimp Producers Face US Anti-dumping Charge

By James Liu

On December 31, 2003, the US Ad Hoc Shrimp Trade Action Committee filed a petition with the International Trade Commission (ITC) requesting initiation of an anti-dumping duty investigation on frozen and canned warm water shrimp from Brazil, China, Ecuador, India, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The US alliance claimed the six countries have dumped shrimp on the US market at below cost prices, triggering a plunge in the value of US-harvested shrimp (from US\$1.25 billion in 2000 to US\$559 million in 2002).

On January 20, the US Department of Commerce has launched a shrimp anti-dump-

ing investigation against the six countries. Of the six, China was charged with largest dumping rate (119 to 267 percent) with Brazil second (40 to 230 percent).

The China Chamber of Commerce of Import and Export of Foodstuffs, Native Produce and Animal By-Products (CFNA) called on dozens of shrimp enterprises from Guangdong, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces to hold an emergency meeting in Beijing to discuss ways to deal with the anti-dumping suit. Chinese shrimp farmers from Guangdong, Guangxi and Fujian have given notice to the ITC, via their US lawyers, that they intend to respond to the charge.

Statistics provided by the

CFNA estimated that China exported US\$800 million worth of shrimp last year, half of which was exported to the United States.

Zhang Zhibiao, deputy secretary-general of CFNA, told *Economic Information Daily* that the US government filing of this case for investigation would be a heavy blow to China's shrimp industry.

One Chinese shrimp producer noted, "The government gives no subsidies to the shrimp industry. If we sell at below-cost prices or prices lower than the domestic market, we can't afford it."

"In addition, the shrimp processing industry has created nearly 100,000 job opportunities for Americans. This could

be greatly harmed by restricting the import of shrimp as raw material," Zhang added.

American Sea Product Distribution Association (ASDA) president Wally Stevens also disagreed with the moves by both the ITC and the Department of Commerce. He said that tariffs are permeable barriers, as the Norwegian salmon trade case clearly demonstrates. Shutting down one source only causes an alternate source to emerge to meet consumer demand. According to him, imported shrimp fills 88 percent of the American consumer's demand for the product.

A US citizen, Dinh Duc Huu, an investor in shrimp breeding Vietnam, also said NO to the

anti-dumping petition. He has invested US\$50 million in Ha Tin to establish a shrimp field that can export 1,000 tons of shrimp to the US annually.

Chinese shrimp exports originate mainly in southern China. Shrimp exports are a major source of income for fishermen in coastal areas with Guangdong being China's most important shrimp producing area. Guangdong's shrimp exports to the United States are estimated at US\$100 million annually.

"If the Department of Commerce makes decisions that only benefit a certain group of people while causing me to lose my livelihood, I will meet them at the Supreme Court," says Dinh.



Chen Tianqiao denying copying charges

Korean Gamemaker Files IP Suit

By James Liu

Visitors to South Korean game developer Wemade's website will see an announcement stating that it expects a result from the Singapore International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) following arbitration against Chinese mainland game operator Shanda and South Korean game distributor Actoz in an intellectual property (IP) rights dispute.

Wemade also filed a suit to the Beijing No.1 Intermediate People's Court. It requested the court to shut down the website Legend of the World run by Shanghai Shanda Company, according to a report on January 9 in the *Beijing Morning Post*. Chen Tianqiao, Shanda's owner, made Forbes China's 100 richest list last year.

Wemade claims that its agent, Actoz, unilaterally ceased Legend of Mir operations with Shanda on January 24, 2003 – due to a breach of contract by Shanda. Legend of the World, a new game developed and launched by Shanda shortly after, is cited by Wemade to contain over 100 details copied from its Legend of Mir product (developed and registered in Korea in September of 2000). Wemade also accuses Shanda of upgrading hundreds of thousands of registered Chinese users from Legend of Mir to the Legend of the World.

Shanda submitted papers for arbitration to the ICC on July 4 last year, asking for compensation from both Actoz and Wemade for failing to provide adequate support and for loss of income. Shanda later withdrew from arbitration due to an out-of-court agreement with Actoz to continue operating Legend of Mir. Wemade refused to withdraw from arbitration and the ICC has announced that it will move ahead with arbitration next month.

Claiming to have developed Legend of the World independently, Shanda released this game in July of last year at a cost of US\$4.8 million. Shanda Networking stated that this investment was recouped on the first day of launch. Attracting 300,000 simultaneous users within a month, Shanda began charging in October 2003 – generating millions of dollars of income.

Shanda Networking plans to list on Nasdaq later this spring, and expects to raise at least US\$300 million. Shanda Networking claims to have 170 million registered users on its website, www.shanda.com.cn.

CEPA Grants HK Lender Branch License

By Grace Wei

Wing Lung Bank Ltd announced on January 17 that China's Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) has approved its application to set up a branch in Shenzhen and thus becomes the first Hong Kong lender to receive a branch license.

Beijing Youth Daily reported that since the implementation of the Mainland-Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangements (CEPA), three HK-based banks have already submitted their applications to CBRC for branch operations in the mainland. Wing Lung Bank's application acceptance marks the first approval since the CEPA took

effect.

Wing Lung Bank's first mainland branch will open later this spring, in the Luohu District of Shenzhen. The Shenzhen Foreign Trade and Economic Bureau, with the Administration of Industry and Commerce, have formulated an evaluation procedure for applications from Hong Kong investors who wish to set up companies in the mainland.

Pursuant to the CEPA, the registered capital threshold required of Hong Kong and Macau banks wishing to open branch operations in the Chinese mainland has been lowered from US\$20 billion to US\$6 billion.

The asset threshold requirement of parent banks wanting to set up registered local operations was also lowered from US\$10 billion to US\$6 billion. CBRC officials noted that foreign-invested banks handle RMB services in 13 mainland cities and that the Commission will give preference to Hong Kong and Macau banks applying to set up branches and offer RMB services in these cities. Wing Lung Bank reported total assets of US\$8.64 billion at the end of June last year.

Two other Hong Kong lenders, Dah Sing Bank and Shanghai Commercial Bank, have also submitted their applications to CBRC.



Maybelline cozies up to new sister-brand Yue-Sai.

Photos by Photocom

L'Oreal on Acquisition Spree

By James Liu

On Monday, the L'Oreal group finalized an agreement to acquire the popular make-up and skincare brand Yue-Sai, founded by Chinese-American TV celebrity Yue-Sai Kan.

As the deal includes a Shanghai manufacturing plant, the agreement will boost the group's production capacity to support rapid growth in Asia.

Founded in 1992, Yue-Sai grew to become a major brand in China with strong market position and distribution (sold in 240 of China's largest cities). Owned by French cosmetic company Coty since 1996, Yue-Sai reported total sales of nearly 38 million euros in 2003.

"I will stick to Yue-Sai, no matter who owns it. It is Yue-Sai Kan who told me what is beauty," said Yuan Mei, a middle-aged lady in Shanghai, to *Xinhua News Agency*.

L'Oreal's increasing appetite for well-established brands in the mainland reflects the rapidly growing popularity of make-up among Chinese women. The Yue-Sai deal follows the Paris-based company's announcement on December 10 of its takeover of Chinese cosmetics and skincare brand Mininurse. Despite rumors of an imminent P&G acquisition of Yue-Sai, P&G purchased German skincare brand Nivea instead at a price of 3.2 billion euros according to *Nanfang Daily*.

The size of China's cosmetic market now ranks eighth in the world and second only to Japan in Asia, a clear sign of growing disposable income.

Paolo Gasparrini, general manager of L'Oreal China, said in L'Oreal's official website that the company will keep the valuable brand name. "Yue-Sai, a symbolic brand for the Chinese woman of today, will naturally slot into L'Oreal's portfolio. The brand strengthens the group's leadership position in make-up and facial skincare."

L'Oreal's core brands now occupy several number one positions: L'Oreal Paris in premium hair color, Maybelline in make-up, Vichy in pharmacy sales and Lancôme in selective distribution.

Mobile Dealers Cash in on SMS

By James Liu

Short message service (SMS) replaced telephone calls and postcards this year to become the most popular way in China to wish friends and relatives a happy Year of the Monkey.

From last Wednesday noon to early Thursday morning, registered mobile subscribers in Beijing alone sent over 100 million SMS – according to the latest data from Beijing Unicom and Beijing Mobile. The two companies raked in a hefty 10 million yuan (US\$1.21 million) in earnings from SMS in a single day.

An estimated 10 billion SMS greetings will be sent during the seven-day holiday that began on January 22. Last year, over seven billion messages were sent during the lunar new year festival, earning China Mobile and China Unicom nearly 500 million yuan.

From Passengers to Cargo

By James Liu

China's Taikoo Aircraft Engineering Company (TAECO) will cooperate with Boeing Corporation from the US to refit a Boeing-747-400 passenger plane for air freighter service. It's the first time this type of plane has been converted from passenger to freighter use.

TAECO said on Tuesday that the refit will concentrate on reinforcing the main cargo bay while adding a side cargo door. The internal walls will also be reformed with a higher resistance material.

The refitted plane will be identical to Boeing's original air freighters, able to carry over 113 tons of cargo for distances up to 7,600 kilometers.

Based in Xiamen City in the southeast of China, TAECO runs Asia's largest civil airplane repair base. It has successfully refitted six Boeing-747-200s and 300s.

Beijing Doubles Mobile Fitting Exports to Europe

By James Liu

Beijing's exports of mobile phone parts to Europe reached US\$1.265 billion in 2003, doubling the figure for the previous year, according to the latest statistics from Beijing Customs. Major export destinations included Hungary, Germany and the Czech Republic.

Total export of mobile phones and fittings topped US\$1.81 billion last year, up 30.1 percent over the previous year. Exports to Asian countries dropped by 35.9 percent to US\$480 million.

Mobile phone fitting exports alone totaled US\$601 million last year, 13.7 times the figure for the previous year. Exports of finished mobile phones dropped for the first time since 1999 by 10.3 percent (to US\$1.209 billion).

Test Dispute Slows Nesquik Suit

By James Liu

On January 18, the Shanghai No.2 Intermediate People's Court began hearing a local woman's lawsuit against Nestlé and Shanghai Lianjia Supermarket Co for producing and selling genetically modified (GM) food without informing consumers.

The case is now delayed as scientists argue over which tests to use to determine the GM ingredient content of Nestlé's Nesquik brand instant chocolate drink.

Zhu Yanling, 32, says she bought a package of Nesquik for her son from the Gubei outlet of Carrefour (managed by Lianjia) on March 27, 2003. Later, she read that the product contains GM ingredients, a claim that Nestlé has since denied.

The court asked a biological test center run by the Shanghai Academy of Agricultural Sciences to test the product for GM ingredients. Following the standard test for GM foods laid down by the Ministry of Agriculture last May, scientists found no evidence of GM ingredients in the product.

Zhu's attorney, Wu Dong, says that a new and more accurate test should be used in court but admits it could take awhile for the government to establish proper standards on how the test is conducted. The court has not said when it will reach a verdict on the case.

Irish Smoking Ban Imminent

January 26, Dublin (AFP) - Controversy continues to swirl around a sweeping ban in Ireland on smoking in public places, including pubs and restaurants, which now looks set to come into force in March once EU hurdles are cleared.

Health Minister Micheal Martin's proposed ban is being strongly opposed by sections of the hospitality industry, which claims that it will lead to the loss of thousands of jobs.

The ban was to have come into effect on January 1, a date that was subsequently pushed back to last Monday, but a health ministry spokesman said the implementation order has been revoked by Martin pending a new date.

The need to provide three months' notice to the European Commission in Brussels has contributed to the delay, as have legal difficulties with the regulations and arranging the policing of the ban.

"The minister will be making an announcement about a new date in

the next few weeks," the health minister spokesman said.

"He will give several weeks notice of the new implementation date - so it is unlikely the ban will take effect before March."

The Irish Hospitality Industry Alliance, which represents about 3,000 publicans, is taking legal advice about whether to challenge the ban in the courts.

"We are still waiting to see how the pennies drop," a spokesman for the alliance told AFP.

"The minister has a few more things to put in place. He has said he wants to have the ban up and running by April. We are also waiting to see what the European Union says," he said.

It was a year ago that Martin announced plans for a wide-ranging ban on smoking in public places, based on health and safety reports which established "without equivocation" that environmental tobacco smoke can cause cancer.

He said he had been advised that ventilation systems and partial bans in pubs, bars and restaurants were not effective in reducing the threat of second-hand smoke.

The health advice was so blunt and clear-cut that it was no longer possible to "temporise, to negotiate, to water down" protection measures, he said.

Over 6,000 people die prematurely in Ireland every year from diseases caused by tobacco smoke, according to official data.

Media Report:

Europe Strives for a Tobacco-free Continent

Europe is enforcing its fight against tobacco use with new legislation and continuous price hikes this year, making it more and more difficult for smokers to keep puffing.

Many countries across the continent have enacted or are formulating laws to ban smoking in public places, but strong opposition remains against efforts to end the scourge that kills

500,000 each year in the European Union (EU).

In the Netherlands, a new law that came into effect on January 1 prohibits smoking in public places such as public transport, the workplace, cafeterias and toilets. Employees will only be allowed to smoke in special rooms equipped with extractor fans.

Sweden has already passed a tough anti-smoking law that will go into effect in 2005. Ireland is also on the verge of passing a ban similar to the Dutch one. Belgium is gradually toughening up legislation against smoking, while Britain is also deliberating a crackdown on smoking in public places.

The EU is also doing its part to build a smoking-free Europe. Earlier this month, the EU Commission announced that it was considering a move to outlaw smoking in bars and restaurants across the 15 member countries.

So far there is no Europe-wide regulation on smoking or the prices of tobacco.

Xinhua News

UK Drops Boeing for Tanker Talks

Jan 26, London (Reuters) - Britain chose Airbus parent EADS and its partners for talks on a 13 billion pound (\$23.7 billion) military tanker aircraft deal on Monday, dropping a bid from a rival consortium led by U.S. company Boeing.

"The MoD (Ministry of Defense) will now enter into detailed negotiations with Air-Tanker," the ministry said in a statement that announced a surprise delay of some months in awarding the final contract.

Analysts said the AirTanker consortium led by EADS would probably finalize Europe's largest tanker order, although they added that the UK ministry appeared prepared to make changes.

U.S. officials have wrangled for months with a similar impasse over Boeing tankers for the Air Force as opponents to a lease deal in Congress argue that buying the planes would be cheaper.



Aventis Rejects Takeover

January 28, Paris (AP) - French drugmaker Aventis SA's board recommended Wednesday that shareholders reject an unsolicited \$60 billion takeover bid from smaller rival Sanofi-Synthelabo SA and told management to study alternatives.

After a five-hour meeting, the Aventis board followed the management recommendation to reject the hostile 48 billion euro offer, saying it "was not in the best interests of the shareholders and employees."

"As a consequence, the board recommends that shareholders reject this hostile offer," the company said in a statement.

Aventis chairman Jurgen Dormann had already brushed off Sanofi's takeover bid in a company statement issued shortly after the bid was launched Monday.

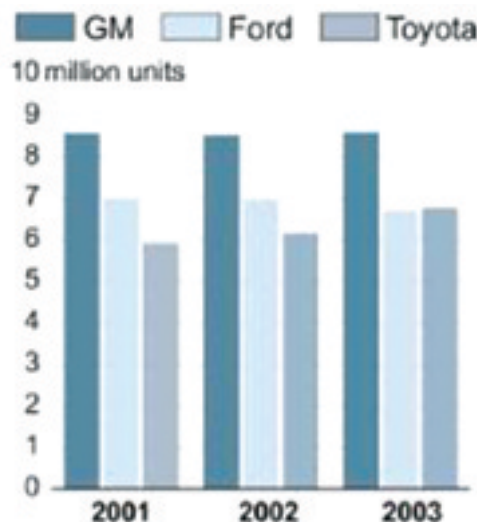
Toyota Surpasses Ford

January 26, Tokyo (AP) - For months, sales data had been predicting a milestone for Toyota Motor Corp. On Monday, it was official: the Japanese automaker surpassed Ford Motor Co. of the United States in global sales for 2003 as the world's No. 2 automaker.

Toyota confirmed the tally it gave last Friday for worldwide sales for 2003 of 6.78 million vehicles, up 9.9 percent from 6.17 million the previous year. Ford's 2003 sales have slipped to 6.72 million vehicles, down 3.6 percent from 6.97 million the year before.

The world's largest automaker remains General Motors Corp. of the United States, which sold 8.6 million vehicles in 2003.

Worldwide vehicle sales



NOTE: Sales figures do not include vehicles sold by affiliates in which an automaker holds a stake of less than 50 percent; Toyota's 2003 figure is an estimate.

Record Decline in World Tourism

January 27, Madrid (AFP) - The number of international tourists who travelled last year fell by 1.2 percent from 2002, the World Tourism Organization said, reporting the biggest decline in its history.

The number of tourists totalled 694 million people, the organization said, citing provisional figures, which nonetheless showed that France remained the world's number one tourist destination ahead of Spain and the United States.

It attributed the setback to the war in Iraq, the outbreak of SARS in Asia and the weak state of the world economy.

But the organization said it saw the prospects for growth this year as being more promising.

US, Costa Rica Reach Free Trade Deal

January 25, Washington (AP) - The Bush administration reached an agreement with Costa Rica on Sunday that will allow the nation to join four of its neighbors in creating a Central American Free Trade Area with the United States, officials of the two countries announced.

The agreement came after two weeks of intense negotiations aimed at overcoming differences in such areas as telecommunications and insurance that had prompted Costa Rica to back out at the last minute from completing the CAFTA talks last month with the four other nations, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras.

Administration officials said they were pleased with the market-opening language finally reached with Costa Rica, which had sought to protect its monopoly operations in telephones and insurance.

Costa Rica agreed to fully open its insurance market to foreign competition by 2011. It also agreed to open three key sectors of its telephone market to competition - wireless services, private network services and Internet services.

While the country will maintain bans against foreign competition in other areas of telecommunications, US negotiators said they were satisfied that they had torn down barriers in the areas of most interest to US companies.

"Costa Rica needed a little more time to complete its participation in CAFTA, and we're very pleased it has joined its Central American neighbors in this cutting-edge, modern free trade agreement," US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick said in a statement.

The negotiating breakthrough was announced jointly in Washington by Zoellick and Costa Rican Trade Minister Alberto Trejos.

However, US labor unions are vowing to strongly oppose the pact, which they believe would continue a trend of exposing US workers to increased competition from low-wage nations with lax labor and environmental laws.

For its part, the administration hopes to use congressional passage of CAFTA as a stepping stone to achieving an even bigger goal, creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas, covering all 34 democracies in the Western hemisphere.

In 2003, US goods exports to Costa Rica totaled \$3.5 billion, up about 13 percent from the previous year, while the United States imported \$3.4 billion in goods from Costa Rica, an increase of 9.7 percent from 2002.

Costa Rica accounts for about one-third of US trade with the five CAFTA countries. Adding the Dominican Republic to CAFTA would create the second largest US export market in Latin America behind Mexico.

The United States currently has free trade agreements with Mexico and Canada, its partners in the North American Free Trade Agreement, and individual deals with Israel, Jordan, Chile and Singapore.



The US Federal Reserve, faced with mixed signals on growth and fresh evidence the economy is failing to create new jobs, decided Wednesday to keep a key short-term interest rate unchanged at a 45-year low. Meeting for the first time in the new year, Fed Chairman Alan Greenspan and his colleagues left the overnight federal funds rate at 1 percent as widely expected.

Spring Festival in New York



On January 25, the annual Spring Festival was held in Manhattan's Chinatown. The two-hour parade featured over twenty floats and performances by local Chinese societies. Interestingly enough, the parade is now co-organized by the Chinese societies from both sides of the Taiwan Straits who used to have their own celebrations before.

Above: "Monkey King" is the mascot of this year. Below: Lion playing is a must.

Photos by Zhao hongyi

By Zhao Hongyi

The main sense I got when arriving at JFK international airport in the middle of the night on January 14 was how intensely cold it was. An unusually heavy snowfall swirled outside the windows as we drove to the Chinese embassy in New York.

But the next day when we visited the two Chinatowns, one in the southeast corner of Manhattan and the other in the northeastern district of Queens, a strong atmosphere of happiness and preparations for the traditional Chinese lunar new year took hold.

Invited by the ministry of culture, four reporters, two from CCTV, one from sina.com and one from *Beijing Today*, were sent to New York to report on celebrations of the holidays and help promote the concept of the Spring Festival, both to overseas Chinese and Americans.

"Over 800,000 Asians, mostly Chinese, are living in the city of New York," according to Martin Golden, former New York city council member and now the state senator of New York. This is about 10 percent of the city's total population of eight million.

Golden has been trying for years to get official recognition for the Spring Festival as one of the city's public holidays. With the help of John Liu, a city council member originally from Taiwan, Golden has been pushing forward the legislation.

"This is only the beginning," Golden says. "We will promote the Spring Festival as one of the holidays in the state of New York and the whole of the US."

But the holiday still means the most to Chinese people. Beijing sent the Yunnan Ethnic Arts Troupe to help local Chinese community celebrations, providing fantastic ethnic dances and performances. Local Chinese communities also organized many celebrations in their traditional ways, with performances, Chinese culture seminars and parades, attracting other ethnic residents with the warmth and happiness of "Chinese New Year."

It's an important reminder of home and culture for the four million Chinese people living in America. As Marty Markowitz, governor of Brooklyn District of New York city, put it, "Brooklyn is a place for the world, and we hope it will be the Chinese capital of the Americans." A new Chinatown is developing in Mr. Markowitz's district which is in the south of the city.

Festival Dining Means Big Bucks

By James Liu

The highlight of Spring Festival must be the grand reunion dinner involving the whole extended family. Of the 2,000 people recently surveyed, 46.5 percent said this dinner was the "one most desired thing in the year."

Increasingly busy schedules mean more and more families gathering at restaurants rather than at home for the lunar new year. Are restaurants within their rights to cash in on the occasion by raising prices or setting a minimum spending standard?

Reporters of *China Youth Daily* contacted 15 restaurants in Shanghai and found that 95 percent of them set spending minimums, with customers paying 10 to 40 percent more than at non-holiday times. Set menus for eight persons cost 2,888 yuan at the Shanghai Garden Hotel, 3,888 yuan at Westin Hotel and 1,580 yuan at Meilongzhen Restaurant.

"It's ridiculous for restaurants to decide how much I spend on dinner," Mr. Lin told *China Youth Daily*. Last year, Lin and his family spent 1,888 yuan for a set menu dinner. "There was no difference from other times except that the dish names were changed to more auspicious meanings, but the price was 20 percent higher," Lin said.

A restaurant manager who declined to be named told *China Youth Daily* that setting spending minimums is common practice within the catering industry. He admitted that the special lunar new year dishes were the same as at other times. "The guests don't care too much about price, they just want an auspicious blessing from what they eat," he said.

Some guests complained that this practice is unfair because consumers should retain the right to decide how they spend their money, according to the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Consumers' Right and Interests. Yuan Beijun, director of the Department of Protection of Consumers' Right and Interests, disagrees, stating that Shanghai has no laws forbidding the practice of setting minimum spending levels. "According to Shanghai regulations on the Protection of Consumers' Right and Interests, consumers have the right to know the offering and the right to decide," Yuan explained. "Consumers can refuse to choose restaurants which set minimum spending standards," Yuan said.

"All major restaurants have minimum spending standards so where should I go?," a surnamed Fan guest told *China Youth Daily*.

Drink and Get Home Safely

By Hans Leu

Offering to drive tipsy revelers home rather than allow them to drive themselves, the newly-launched Home Safe service was introduced by Beijing Benao Anda Company at the start of 2004.

While no statistics are yet available as to the effects of the new service on the capital's traffic safety during Spring Festival, patrons are happy.

He Jin, general manager of the company, notes over 100 requests for the new service were received in just the first fifteen days of service launch. Generating 7,000 yuan of gross income, company employees delivered high-quality service without a single customer complaint. The hot demand for the new service has created job opportunities for over 20 drivers, laid off by their state-owned employers.

Despite the rosy reactions from satisfied customers, some legal experts are concerned about the possible social implications of this new service. "This service is a risks challenging social security, like the 'unlock' service which induced greater occurrence of some crimes," says Xu Shengzhong, lawyer of Beijing Yuelin Lawyer Agency.

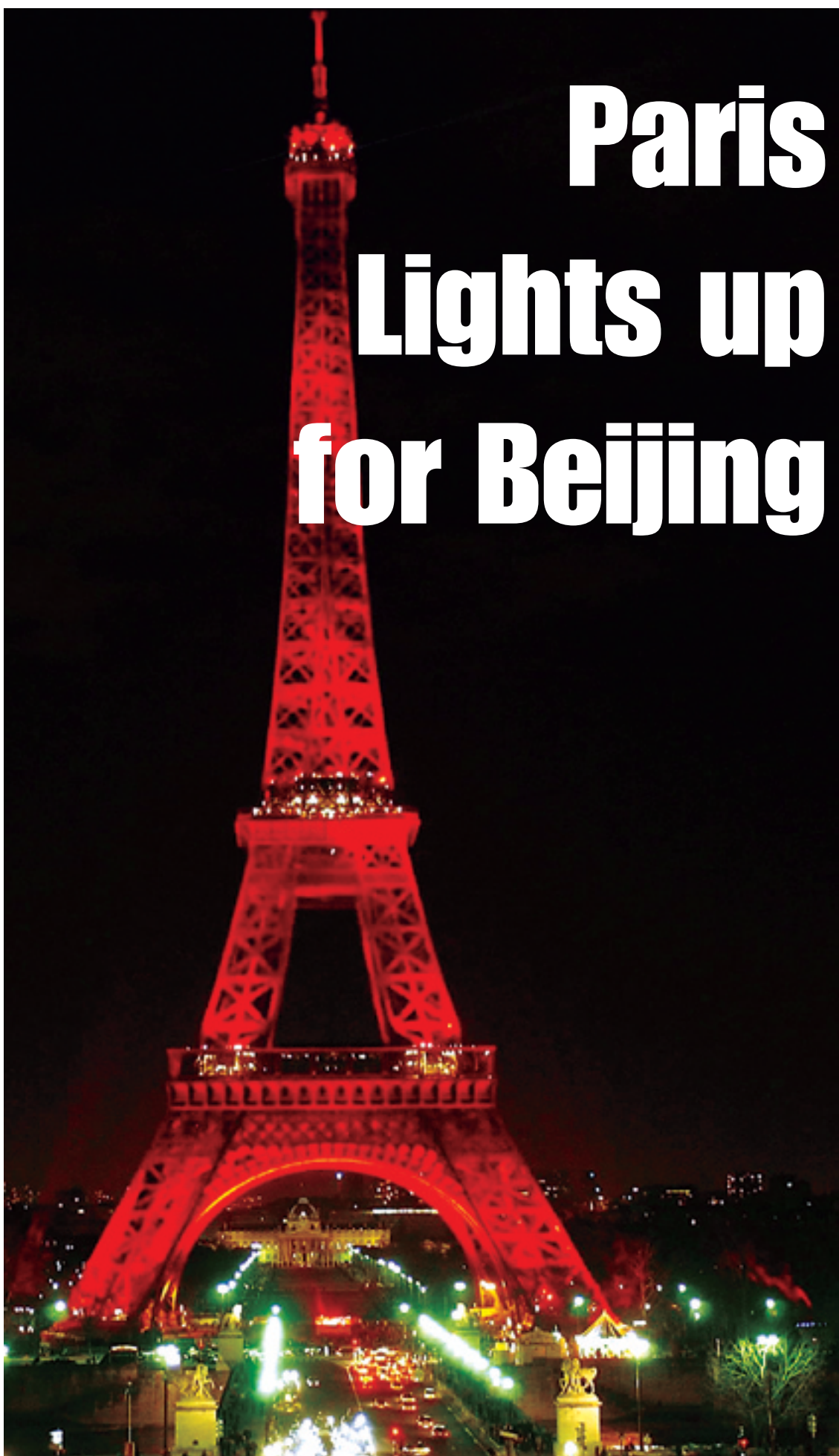
Xu notes that service providers should be strictly certified and receive professional training before offering new services. But in China, owing to the relatively nascent development stage of the service industry, there are no laws or regulations to standardize small-scale services like Home Safe. As a result, Xu adds, these services will be difficult to monitor by authorities and hence risk increasing the crime rate and decrease general social security.

In response, He Jin explains that all company employees are Beijing residents and skillful drivers. Though He Jin maintains that the company visits all drivers in their homes to investigate their backgrounds and moral character, he admitted that no special inspection or screening procedure was used in the hiring of employees.

"The public security and traffic management authorities told me that there is no special investigation or screening procedure for this industry," He Jin notes. "But the local industrial and commercial administration told me that Home Safe is not included in the current categorization of services issued by the government, so I cannot included these related words in the name of the company."

In fact, a prototype of Home Safe appeared in Beijing a few years ago according to Wei Peiping, formerly in charge of the security in an area of Haidian District. "Few of them were taken up on their offer since the drivers didn't trust them," adds Wei.

"The most important issue for probable disputes is who will be responsible for the signing of the contract," says Wei. "The drunk person has less-than-ideal judgement and memory, making it difficult for them to understand the contract and his responsibilities or rights. This could be a major source of trouble in case of accidents." Wei concluded that the solution to the contract disputes is for patrons to sign a contract well before they start tippling.



Eiffel Tower in red to celebrate the Year of the Monkey

Xinhua Photo

By Su Wei

Last Saturday afternoon, the sky cleared over Paris after several overcast days as Parisians and tourists streamed onto the Champs-Élysées where Chinese culture took center-stage as part of Paris-Beijing Week.

Red lanterns lit up the avenue and the 115-year-old landmark Eiffel Tower this week as Paris joined China to usher in the Year of the Monkey.

This marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and France.

Dragon and lion dances, red-fan performances, Peking Opera and martial arts brought Paris a taste of China. The broad boulevard was transformed into a

noisy sea of red and gold, traditionally lucky colors.

An enormous goldfish, symbolizing good luck for the new year, led the parade on its 1.2-kilometre journey from the Arc de Triomphe to the Place du Rond-Point near the Elysée palace.

"We're very proud to hold the parade," Wang Qishan, acting mayor of Beijing, was quoted by Xinhua during his attendance at the events in Paris. "The parade shows the charm of Chinese culture and its vigor in modern times since the country adopted opening-up strategic thinking."

Patrick Borri, who watched the performances, said that Chinese culture has strong appeal in France. "I myself like Chinese kung fu very much and I

am very happy to see Chinese culture exhibitions held in Paris," he was quoted as saying by French media.

The event on the Champs-Élysées was attended by 200,000 people and marked the first time a parade dedicated to a foreign culture was held on the avenue.

Over 7,500 performers and dozens of parade floats kicked off the celebrations, part of the Year of Chinese Culture in France inaugurated last October.

Running until July, the program explores China's ancient civilization, folklore, art and literature, education, technology and tourism. The largest and longest cultural exchange undertaken by Beijing, China's Year of France begins in October this year.

Mao's First Great-Grandson Celebrates First Month

By Guo Yuandan

Mao Xinyu, the grandson of Mao Zedong, hosted a family party in Beijing on Monday to celebrate his son's manyue (full month). Manyue is counted exactly one month from the birth date of the baby, who was born at Beijing Union Medical College Hospital on December 26, 2003 – the 110th anniversary of Mao's birth.

Nearly three decades after his death, Mao Zedong has earned a new title: great-grandfather. The son of Mao Anqing (Mao's second son), Mao Xinyu is in his early 30's.



Liu Bin, Dong Dong and Mao Xinyu Photo by Yuan Yi

Both mother Liu Bin and the baby are in good condition. Two days before the party, the family had already chosen a nickname, Dong Dong, meaning east. The formal name has not yet been finalized as the family considers this quite an important task. A decision about the name can sometimes take years.

The birth of the child has brought the whole family happiness. Mao Xinyu's mother, Zhao Hua, and aunt, Li Na (Mao's second daughter to Ji-ang Qing) all enjoy the festivities and were busy fussing over the baby.

Welfare Lottery Sales Hit High

By Zhang Ran

Despite the odds, welfare lottery sales at Beijing's four temple fairs during Spring Festival hit a 24.5 million yuan high on the sixth day of the Monkey Year (Tuesday, January 27).

Xing Xiaowei, director of Beijing Welfare Lottery Distribution Center, made an urgent decision on January 25th to transfer an additional 8 million yuan from the China Welfare Lottery Distribution Center. This allowed 32 more QQ cars to be added on as awards.

The Ditan, Changdian, Longtan and Baiyun Temple fairs are the traditional temple fairs in Beijing during Spring Festival. Initially, 80 QQ cars and 400 TCL TVs were prepared as the first and special prizes. Other prizes awarded between 2 and 1000 yuan.

As lottery sales at the four temple fairs closed on Tuesday, any unsold tickets and unawarded prizes will be saved for the next Spring Festival. According to the Beijing Welfare Lottery Distribution Center, 98 QQ cars and 490 TCL color TVs have been sent out so far to lucky prize winners.

The first top prize winner, Mr. Hao, bought his ticket at the Baiyun Temple Fair. The 40-year old won a QQ car at 9 am on the first day of the Monkey Year, last Thursday.

US Professor Wins Top Honor in Chengdu

By Zhang Zhan

Dr. Robert Spear of the University of California at Berkeley recently won the Gold Medal from Sichuan Province for his research in China on schistosomiasis prevention and cure. Schistosomiasis refers to the group of tropical diseases caused by infestation with schistosomes through contaminated water, and is characterized by infection and gradual destruction of the kidneys, liver, and other organs. Dr. Spear flew to Chengdu on January 13 to accept the award in person.

During the 10 years of cooperative research, Dr. Spear has brought funding worth US \$2 million to Sichuan Province. This has helped establish the new schistosomiasis "monitor" method using the new technology of Global Position System, Satellite Remote Sensing and Geographical Information System (3S). This scientific research achievement is expected to generate benefits worth over 120 million yuan.

Based on the *Chengdu Economic Daily* report in 1992, Dr. Spear met Chen Mingchun, president of the Chinese Academy of Preventive Medicine, during a multinational meeting on public health. Chen invited Dr. Spear, an expert on environmental health risk evaluation and mathematical model application, to apply his methods to the prevention and cure of schistosomiasis in China.

Dr. Spear took up the invitation and first came to Sichuan in June, 1993 without much knowledge of schistosomiasis. He was shocked upon visiting a 29-year old fisherman, in the terminal stages of the disease with cirrhosis of the liver. Through further research, Dr. Spear realized that fisherman could not avoid being infected with the disease and only through a change of living environment could schistosomiasis be controlled.

As Dr. Spear told journalists at Jinjiang Hotel, his work has been amazing as both American and Chinese sides learn from each other. Since 1994, twice a year in June and November, Dr. Spear has led a crew of doctors and graduate students to the epidemic ground zero of the Xichang mountainous areas. Through on-the-spot inspection, Dr. Spear continually modified his data on the infection rates of humans, freshwater snails, domestic animals and snail distribution. By 1997, the research group was able to announce the construction of world's first schistosomiasis mathematical model.

When not teaching, Dr. Spear devoted himself to schistosomiasis research. Accompanied by his wife, he went deep into the Xichang area. On January 1, Dr. Spear flew to Xichang to start a project to destroy snails by methane. Each household received 1000 yuan to build their own system. In the new year, the Ministry of Public Health will share its experience in schistosomiasis prevention and cure throughout the rest of China.



Parents now can leave their children at the Postnatal Service Center for New Mothers during holidays in Beijing.

Photo by Lily

Baby Alone but not Lonely

By Wang Xiaoxiao

A two-month-old baby celebrated Spring Festival at the Postnatal Service Center for New Mothers while his parents returned home in the distant south, courtesy of a new baby-sitting service launched by the Center. Worried about the long journey and cold weather, the baby's parents felt it was better for the baby to stay at the center.

According to a nurse at the Center, babies are under 24-hour close care every day. Shortly upon waking, the baby gets its morning milk feeding accompanied by music. Then the baby listens to nursery rhythms read to it while sipping on calcium-fortified water. After a noontime snooze, babies swim in a carefully-heated pool complete with specially designed life buoys.

Specially trained doctors and nurses provide care for the newly-launched Baby-sitting service during the Spring Festival. The service costs 25 yuan per hour or 150 yuan for the whole day.

Director Pan told *Beijing Youth Daily* that the new service intends to meet the wide gap in the market when many babysitters go home for the holidays. For young couples with many relatives and friends to visit, the new service lets their baby rest undisturbed.



Candidates present their credentials at a job fair.

Photo by Photocom

Diploma or Bust

Fake diploma puts job in jeopardy

By Chen Ying

Diploma or ability, which is more important to get a job? One girl's story indicates the former may still be the key in China.

Mei Jing, a girl in Wuhan, Hubei Province, got the highest scores in an examination for the position of an official in a local government department. But then it emerged her junior college diploma was fake.

The Laid Off Welfare Service Center of Jiangxia District Civil Affairs Bureau in Wuhan held the exam last November to hire five new employees.

According to a report in *Chutian Metropolis Daily* on January 10, the center held both oral and written examinations to enlist five newcomers, requiring all the participants to have at least a junior college diploma. More than 120 people participated in the exams.

After marking the tests, Jiangxia District Personnel Bureau published the five winners last December. Soon, the bureau received a letter revealing that Mei, who had come top in both the oral and written examinations, had a fake junior college diploma from Wuhan TV University. This was confirmed after the bureau contacted the university.

Even though Mei Jing had later gained a genuine college diploma, the fact she had a fake junior college diploma rendered it invalid according to the regulations.

Whether to employ Mei Jing now is a vexing problem for the local government. They have to make the final decision soon. Mei is unwilling to discuss the problem. "At least the examination result proves my ability," she told Qianlong News.

But her story caused nationwide controversy.

Some think a talented person should be employed regardless of their diplomas. Should Mei get the job? Opinions follow:

Lin Guozhang, professor from Beijing Normal University

Mei's story reflects a general phenomenon in our society. Public examination has always been the main form of talent selection in China although this method is not perfect. Educational background and all kinds of diplomas are usually taken as the qualification requirement for interviewees. This means many talented people lose the opportunity.

But to ensure the system's severity and transparency on talent selection, the rule shouldn't be broken just for the sake of cherishing talent. It's unreasonable to break the tradition just because of Mei's personal excellence.

An official, requesting anonymity

Mei's grades in the examination prove she is competent to do the job. Maybe she had her own reasons to get a fake diploma. She should be admitted as she would do a good job.

Ymll, Internet surfer

Mei cheated so she shouldn't be employed. Credibility is what we really need to promote today. Certainly, improper regulations should be adjusted. Mei can still make another choice. It's her own business if she doesn't get the job because of this.

Tian Dezheng, from Southern Metropolis Daily

It's hard to embody an individual comprehensive qualification only through educational background. Bill Gates didn't even finish at college. It's very urgent to change the traditional ideas about talent to make a real elite.

It is a business

By Chen Ying

Since a certificate is the touchstone to get a job, diploma worship in China's job market has led to a boom in the fake diploma business.

Though the government has taken some measures to crack down on circulation of fake diplomas, the business appeals to a growing market. It is easy to find vendors wandering around in front of the gate of some famous universities, such as Beijing University or Renmin University. Cell phone users sometimes receive text message adverts for fake diplomas. Online, things are even worse. A Harvard Ph.D. diploma is available for only US \$100.

According to a CCTV report, a Shenzhen talent agency made a random inspection of 3,000 applicant diplomas and found that as many as 800 were forged. There is no scientific data available about the exact severity of the problem, but a 2000 estimate put the nationwide figure of falsified diplomas at 600,000. The number is surely much higher now.

As Xinhua reported in 2000, post-graduate enrollments in China reached 120,000 for the first time and the pace is still accelerating. It shows that higher education, especially post-graduate education, is no longer limited to a select few and the overall level of education is rising nationwide.

But that is not the full story. "A school wants money, and a student wants a diploma. There seems to be a perfect fit," said Wang Jianping, a media commentator. "In the hit novel *Siege*, a character buys a fake diploma abroad but feels uneasy about it. Nowadays, some people don their ill-gotten graduation regalia with no shame at all."

According to the Ministry of Education, an online system for diploma certification has been established at the China Higher-education Students Information Website (<http://www.chsi.com.cn>). The ministry has registered all the diplomas issued from 1991 and 2000. Now about 3.44 million diplomas have been registered. At least it's a start.

Zhengzhou Plans Grand Boulevard

By Wang Fang

On January 7, 2004, eight well-known architecture design institutions from home and abroad participated in the bid to construct Zhengzhou's new "Landscape Boulevard".

Zhengzhou aims to build an attractive grand avenue which will connect the old downtown and the new city. The design will have to reflect the city's 3,600 years of history as well as its current role as a commercial center.

Mr. Li Ke, the secretary of the municipal Party committee of Zhengzhou, and Mayor Wang Wen described the look they wanted for the boulevard to the bidders.

They cited the examples of Century Boulevard in Pudong, Shanghai and Shennan Boulevard in Shenzhen, Guangdong as examples of the kind of thing they had in mind.

As to the question of capital for the project, the local government hopes to attract donations from citizens as well as using public funds.

Media response:

Wang Ruoshan, Jiangnan News

The landscape boulevard implies a dangerous signal. Many cities do not care about the local economies or the urgent needs of the local people, just building China's largest and grandest buildings or roads. It reflects the atmosphere of craving for greatness and keeping up with the Joneses in official circles.

They use the excuse of changing the impression of cities for these grand construction projects. In their view, after building some large squares, long boulevards or high skyscrapers, people's impression of the cities will be improved. Therefore the local leaders can boost their reputation without caring about the cost. So every new round of leaders will have a set of new plans, so a waste of taxpayers money is the inevitable outcome.

Hao Hong, Huadong News

We always want the best. In recent years, the so-called "landscape boulevard" has been mentioned frequently

in city construction plans. It seems that without such a wide and impressive symbol, the city construction plan could not be perfect.

The primary purpose is transportation. The major consideration to build a road comprises such factors as the stream of automobiles, people, and its function in the whole civil construction. The national situation of more people and less land determines that we should make the most of land resources. Constructing a wide boulevard with too much grass, flowers and trees would be too luxurious.

Geng Yinping, China Youth Daily

Certainly modern society requires progress in city design. Cities need their own symbolic architecture. For instance, the Statue of Liberty is the symbol of New York and American spirit. The architecture should accord with the local human and city culture. It is said that the characteristics of Zhengzhou are as follows: central location, sufficient transportation,

abundant resources, long history and commercial center. Mr. Zhu Zixuan, the professor of Tsinghua University once indicated that the development and layout of Zhengzhou should follow two axes. One is the historical axis and the other is the geographical axis. Zhengzhou was the first capital of the Shang Dynasty 3,600 years ago. From the point of geography, Songshan Mountain is to the south and the Yellow River is to the north. We have to doubt whether such a modern boulevard is suitable to the traditional layout and manner of Zhengzhou.

Second, we should also take into consideration the economic benefits. The investment will need to be high. However, the data from Zhengzhou Statistics Bureau demonstrates that in 2002, the gross domestic product in Zhengzhou was only 94 billion yuan, far lower than somewhere like Shenzhen with 166.5 billion yuan GDP in 2000. Some people think the main reason for this policy is to enhance the fame of the local officials.

Readers & Leaders

Keeping the Moss of History

By Virginia Stibbs Anami

Over the past twenty years I have been walking the hutongs of the city, visiting villages and climbing ancient mountain paths in search of Beijing's temple relics. In the process I became more and more aware of the importance of environmental and preservation concerns. Trips to find old temples often brought me to places that no longer keep past appearances. But I was usually able to find aged trees or some old carved pieces of stone. They took on the mantle of the site's history and maintained the atmosphere of these places, long after rituals there ceased.

There are a number places in rural Beijing where attention is urgent, such as the many villages of Beijing that are time capsules and still have unique characteristics. Protection is not simply to keep a solitary pagoda from vandals, but city planners must take care that development of rural villas and amusement areas do not infringe on sites of natural beauty and spoil the moss of history. Future generations, too, must be allowed the excitement of exploration: finding the ancient path, inspecting the centuries old cave and discovering an abandoned hall or broken stele.

The increasing appreciation for the city's old trees and efforts to preserve them is welcome. Unfortunately, these sentinels of living history are often affected adversely when restoration of a venue fails to include a plan for the trees. I have seen roots cut to put in pipes so that the place can be modernized and hold more visitors or cement covering the ground right up to the tree trunks, or chemicals spilled nearby. The worst example was a restoration project where they just forgot about the thousand-year-old tree and had it under plastic covering, and later were surprised that it had died. Its withered trunk stands as a sculptural symbol of our need to be careful of these relics as well.

Once rural areas and the mountains surrounding Beijing seemed so distant and expendable. Over the centuries rocks have been quarried from these mountains to provide for building the successive capital cities of Beijing. But as the urban growth spreads out to these areas, there have sometimes been dire consequences for a number of the beautiful stone mountains and pathways still left around the city. This makes one wonder about what kind of legacy of stone will be left. Even in some designated natural scenic areas, mountains have been just eaten away. The worst desecration I saw was an unusual stone embankment with deep grooves where water has trickled over many millennia. Yet some machine's teeth have taken a big bite out of it and other parts are sliced like a slab of meat. Thus I feel that not just carved and inscribed stones, but rocks and boulders too, are also deserving of protection under our environmental concerns.

There has been a call for making the Shishahai area in central Beijing into a no-car zone. I believe this would greatly enhance the protection of the unique residential landscape of courtyard houses. I have long suggested "designated historical walking/biking roads" for a number of places. For example, Moshikou Road in Shijingshan district is also a perfect setting for such a route. With several temples, tombs and traditional homes, the area would benefit from more comfortable access for visitors without the cars now playing its narrow way.

Another place is Sanjiadian, once a prosperous coal distribution center for more than 200 years by the Yongding River. The main street of the old town is only two kilometers long. Some beautifully carved doorways speak of better times. It was also a way stop for travelers and pilgrims on the western highway to Beijing. At the western end of the street, at a crucial juncture of road and river, the Temple of the Dragon King has stood for centuries to placate the spirits of the often swollen waters. Though no longer used as places of worship, the temples here still keep a bit of the town's history. I hope that in the future some inspired urban planner will make the road of Sanjiadian a pedestrian area.

Although numerous buildings in the capital have been beautifully restored, I still prefer those that have aged with time. In my view, protecting history is more important than rebuilding it. Furthermore, even when very little of architectural value is left, a place is still worthy of recognition and protection because a few stones, one tree standing or even an old well, can in themselves present a strong image of the past, enriching our view of Beijing's soul.

(Virginia Stibbs Anami is the author of "Encounters with Ancient Beijing: Its Legacy in Trees, Stone and Water", Intercontinental Press, Beijing. The book will be available in February 2004.)

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The views expressed in this column are those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect the editorial stance of Beijing Today.

By Su Wei

Dong Shibiao, an intern with *Beijing Times*, got more than he bargained for while covering a story on street gambling cheats on December 30 last year. As he was taking photos of a group of people in a street in Haidian District, a brick was suddenly thrown at him. Seven or eight men then came over and attacked him. Dong's camera was stolen and his head and right hand were injured in the attack.

According to *Beijing Times*, in the second half of last year, four of their journalists were beaten up while covering stories.

Common problem

Journalists found themselves the focus of many media stories last year, often about how they were continually being beaten up and how their attackers mainly got away with it.

On November 29, a reporter for Hubei Television Station was beaten while reporting on an enterprise in Yichang, Hubei Province which was not paying staff their salaries.

On November 20, a reporter from Fujian Television Station was assaulted while investigating a local construction dispute.

On November 12, two reporters with CCTV were beaten when reporting on environment pollution caused by an enterprise in Shanxi Province.

On September 29, a journalist from *Tsingdao Evening News* was beaten up while reporting on a fire accident in Shandong.

On August 1, two journalists from *Nanjing Morning Post* and *Jinling Evening News* were beaten while trying to get an interview with officials from Jiangsu Education Bureau.

According to the All-China Federation of Journalists, they have handled over 350 cases involving journalists being illegally detained or beaten up since 1998. "In fact there are many more such cases which are not reported to us," said a member of the federation who was unwilling to disclose her name.

In the line of fire

Liu Jun, a photographer for *Beijing Times* was beaten up while taking photos of a street fight last December. He says he didn't give it too much thought, even when he saw his own blood dripping on his camera. "It was news, so there was no reason for me to leave the spot," he said.

Wu Jie (pseudonym), a journalist working in Beijing, says heated competition to get the story is one reason why journalists often find themselves in dangerous situations. "Otherwise they wouldn't take such risks," she says. "What's more, due to the pressure of deadlines, journalists may use unorthodox methods to get what they need."

"Most of the people who beat up journalists are either corrupt officials and their subordinates or other rule violators. They are the correct targets for journalists."

Tough on the News Beat



All that remained of Li Gen's camera after he was assaulted.

Xinhua published an article about attacks on journalists last October, shortly after one of its own reporters was beaten up while looking into a mining accident in Dengfeng, Henan Province. The article said the reporter conducted interviews according to legal procedures but a vice director of Dengfeng Public Security Bureau ordered his subordinates to steal the reporter's camera and destroy all the photos.

"How can the Party protect people when officials such as this are responsible for maintaining social security?" the article questioned. Xinhua suggested that one of the reasons for the attack on their reporter was that local officials didn't want their role in the mining accident to be revealed. "They fear their political careers could end if the accident is exposed," the report said.

People's Daily said recently that its journalists had also been attacked while trying to expose wrongdoing and defending the public's right to know. "Most of the people who beat up journal-

ists are either corrupt officials and their subordinates or other rule violators. They are the correct targets for journalists," the paper said.

Who's at risk?

It's not just reporters on the trail of society's wrongdoers who are at risk, according to an entertainment news journalist with a major Beijing newspaper, who asked not to be named. "People say we do not respect the privacy of interviewees," he said. "But we also aim to satisfy people's thirst for information. Whether we take photos or conduct investigations, it all shows our devotion to our jobs."

Wu Jie thinks that most violent situations occur when journalists lack a clear understanding of their role. "The role of a journalist is not to decide what is right or wrong. They need to listen to all the parties involved and give due respect to them," Wu said. "For government departments, journalists should be patient enough to persuade them to accept interviews; for individuals, journalists should understand

and respect their privacy." She doesn't see the need for any conflict regarding interviews. "Once there is a conflict, the interview has to come to a stop, that is, the interview is a failure. An interview is a process involving wisdom rather than courage."

Gary Rice, an assistant professor of journalism at California State University and a reporter and editor for more than 20 years at newspapers in the US, recalls that during his early days as a young sports writer, he was once threatened by the friend of a runner whom he had criticized. "Nothing happened other than some colorful threats," he said. "Another time a social worker made some vague threats of physical violence after a story I co-wrote exposed him as a child molester. Again, nothing happened."

He says journalists should develop people skills and sensitivity. "They can avoid placing themselves in dangerous situations unless it's absolutely necessary," he said. "And if a situation could be confrontational, journal-

ists should not go to the interview alone. That's when a burly, mean-looking photographer with visible tattoos makes a good companion. The threat of massive retaliation might make someone think twice before they tried to beat up a journalist."

Legal recourse?

In July last year, two people who beat up Yang Wei, a photographer with *Beijing Times*, were sentenced to one year in jail with one year probation. It was the first time in Beijing that someone who had beaten up a journalist was given a jail sentence. Yang had been attacked after taking photos of local community management staff beating house owners, early in 2002.

In April last year, Baiyun People's Court, Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, decided a journalist with Southern Metropolitan newspaper should be paid 13,000 yuan in compensation after being beaten while reporting on domestic violence in October 2000.

Cao Ruilin, an expert on media

law, says there's no law dealing specifically with journalists being attacked and this is the main reason people are seldom punished for it. "In most such cases, the punishment is usually an administrative warning," he explained. "Even if there is a sentence, it is a minor one. So the public gets the idea there is nothing serious in beating a journalist."

Xu Qingsong, a legal expert, says that there have been calls to draft laws relating to this problem since the 1980s. "But there are still only documents about it which are nothing more than pieces of paper. They do not have any legal power," he said.

Xu says that media laws can only specify the rights of journalists, instead of actually protecting them. "It should be the Criminal Law and Social Security Regulations that handle attacks on journalists," he said. "But the punishment for those beating journalists is the same as those injuring ordinary people. In fact, there should be some difference," he says.

Xu feels that journalists are often attacked while carrying out a public service, that of monitoring and exposing wrongdoing, which is a right entitled by the constitution.

Elsewhere?

Of the foreign journalists from Europe and America interviewed by *Beijing Today*, few felt that journalists in their countries ran a common risk of being beaten up or injured.

"With the exception of war correspondents, most journalists in the US have little to fear in terms of physical assault on the job. Dozens of journalists are killed and attacked in countries around the world every year, but reporters in the US covering domestic issues generally have few worries about being assaulted by the people they interview," Rice explained. "Overwork, depression, burnout, incompetent bosses, stress and job-related illnesses pose more of a threat to American journalists than getting clobbered by a belligerent interviewee."

Rice says acts of violence against reporters in the US are rare enough that when they do happen, they are remembered. He mentions the murder in 1976 of Don Bolles, a Phoenix, Arizona investigative reporter who had been working on stories about corruption and organized crime. Bolles was killed by a car bomb. "In response to his murder, 36 journalists from around the country converged on Phoenix and launched a six-month investigative reporting project that resulted in numerous stories. Two people eventually went to prison for Bolles' death," he added.

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By Su Wei

For Chang Guangfeng, this year's Spring Festival was a low point in his life. Chang, from Yangzhong, Jiangsu Province, was the leader of a group of 200 migrant workers and has spent the last two years trying in vain to get the money owed to him and his fellow workers.

Under constant pressure to come up with the money, he tried to commit suicide a week before the festival but he was saved. Chang's desperation did at least draw the attention of the local authorities who agreed to pay Chang and the other migrant workers 650,000 yuan. It's better than nothing, but it's a long way short of the 1.63 million yuan they're owed by the company they worked for, China Oriental University City (COUC), based in Langfang, Hebei Province.

"We're in a miserable state, us migrant workers," Chang told *China Youth Daily* at the end of last month. "Once we had to work 18 hours a day when we were ordered to speed up the construction. But now, two years after we finished, we still haven't received a penny for the work. When we asked to be paid, an of-

No Way to Get Paid

University city in Langfang stuck in deficit

ficial with the local government even scolded us. He said, 'you want money? Who do you think you are?'" Chang said.

Can't find the money

On January 16, Chang was told by the local government that just 300,000 yuan would be given to him and the date for the payment was not confirmed. "It was a decision by all the local government officials responsible to pay that amount," he said. "The money is

nothing, like pouring a cup of water on a blazing fire," he sighed.

Chang said he regretted trusting the local authorities. "They said we would be paid on time. I had no reason to think they would cheat us," he said.

He says in fact he did have some hope when hearing about the 300,000 yuan but the other workers were not impressed. One of the three teams he led demanded they should receive all the money. "Then

what about the other two teams?" he asked.

Chang had tried negotiating with Jiangsu Huali Industrial and Trading company, which had been responsible for the construction of the southern gate and road lighting system of the university city. But the company is itself owed 8.1 million yuan by COUC.

Wang Guoxin, general manager of the Huali company, says in order to get the money they had sought help from the local government and also lodged a lawsuit. "But none of it worked. Even with pressure from the Hebei People's Congress, COUC still have not paid us," he said.

Chang says he could understand Wang's position, but the migrant workers were less even tempered. So they decided to loot Chang's house. "My house is empty now," he said. Last year, the workers took away everything valuable that he owned. "My mother is seriously ill as a result of the worry. My wife felt so humiliated she left me and asked for a divorce," Chang said.

"I thought, if I died, no one would ask me to get the money," Chang said. On January 16, in

front of Langfang Public Security Bureau, Chang swallowed several packages of poison and fell down, before being rescued.

The local government immediately agreed to pay 400,000 yuan to one of Chang's teams and 250,000 yuan to the other two teams. That just leaves a million yuan outstanding.

"I can see nothing useful in this solution," Wang said. "There are still several hundred migrant workers coming to me all the time and asking me to pay them."

Massive debts

The idea of a "university city" is based on the need for accommodation for China's growing population of students. It's an increasingly popular idea, partly because of the job and investment opportunities involved, and the Langfang project even gained the personal seal of approval from former president Jiang Zemin.

So COUC was set up in October 1999 in the economic development area of Langfang, Hebei Province, near Daxing and Tongzhou districts of Beijing.

According to COUC's website (http://www.chinaouc.net/main/dongfang_dxc.htm), it aims to be an internationalized uni-

versity city, helping to strengthen the country through supporting education and science. "It is invested in by enterprises but supported by the local government," the website introduction says. "It is a model in the reform of the Chinese higher education system. It is not only a city for education but a city for civilization, human resources and science."

But now, according to *China Youth Daily*, COUC owes around 2.2 billion yuan.

The newspaper said the two main local authorities dealing with the case were Ma, president of the local Court of the Economic Area of Langfang, and Zheng, director of the office responsible for dealing with the university city's debts, including construction payments and migrant worker wages. Both concede that it is common in local construction projects for creditors to be owed several million yuan and that court orders are ineffective in retrieving their money.

Zheng says nearly every day dozens of people come to him asking to be paid.

Li Xiangmin, project manager of No. 2 Building Project Company in Langfang says his company is owed around 10 million yuan by the university city.

Wang Zhanquan, a creditor from Yongqing, Hebei was responsible for planting the green areas of the university city. "We have been owed 1.03 million yuan for three years," he said.

Another contractor employed by COUC, Liu, who only disclosed his surname, is owed even more money. "Although the court decided that COUC should pay me 30 million yuan, I haven't received any of it," he said.

It's not our fault

People's Daily published a letter from the management committee of COUC on January 20. The letter says the university city was established to meet the shortage of university resources in Beijing due to an annual increase in university enrolment of 40 percent since 1998. "In the past four years 43 universities have set up classrooms and dorms in the university city, and over 100,000 students have been studying here, including 50,000 currently," said the letter. "The university city has become a successful trial under the current Chinese situation in solving difficulties for students entering universities."

The letter points out it is understandable that there are some problems in the construction of the university city as it is a new concept. "Problems during the construction relate to its development, so the most effective way to solve these problems is to speed up its development," the letter said. "Most of the problems result from enterprises' behavior rather than that of the local government, such as insufficient funds provided by investors and banks' inability to fulfill the cooperation agreements with enterprises."

The letter concludes confidently, "All the difficulties and problems that the university city has are temporary ones. We are confident it will have a bright future."

Credibility crisis incurred

Ma considers that the local government should also share some responsibility for the debts incurred. "The government promised to provide some loans but the money never materialized," he said.

Just before the spring festival the court collected three million yuan received by the university city and paid it to the COUC's creditors. "I have to say that amount is too small to solve any of the problems," Ma sighed.

A recent article in *Beijing Times* said COUC's unpaid construction expenses was the worst case of its kind to be exposed by Chinese media in the last year.

The article said that although it can be regarded superficially as a debt crisis between enterprises, migrant workers and construction companies, there is also a crisis of credibility facing the local government. "Debt and creditor disputes are muffled by the government, not only so that construction can be completed but also to protect developers in debt disputes," the article said.

Finding Fagin

Reporters' investigation finds a village in Anhui Province getting rich by forcing disabled kids to beg

By Wei Tingyu

On January 2, Gong Xuanxuan, a handicapped 12-year-old girl who had been forced to beg in rags at a crossover bridge in Xinqiao, Baiyun District, Guangzhou, was saved by a young man surnamed Liu and his friends. Her rescue led to the exposure of a ring of handicapped children forced to beg by a master who police are still chasing.

Xuanxuan told police about other children who stayed with her in a rented house and on January 8 police went there. They found the children, but their "chief", who the children knew as San Ya, had escaped. Cooperating with the policemen of Baiyun District, reporters from *Information Times* traced the Chinese Fagin to Gongxiao Village in Taihe County, Anhui Province. It soon emerged that using paralyzed children as beggars was a common local business.

Xuanxuan's story

Mr. Liu couldn't help but feel pity for Xuanxuan. Her legs were stick thin, and she had many cuts. She lay silently on the walkway all day long begging for money, and Liu was one of sympathetic passersby who sometimes gave her money. Liu noticed that the wounds on her legs never healed and one day a cut that had nearly recovered had obviously been made worse. Liu began to suspect that Xuanxuan was being abused and manipulated.

In the afternoon of January 2, he and his friends went to get Xuanxuan and took her to the First Guangzhou municipal hospital in a taxi. Mr. Lin, a friend of Mr. Liu, volunteered to take care of her at his home in Jiahe County.

Xuanxuan revealed her background. She was born handicapped in Gongxiao Village, Anhui Province. She had a father named Gong Qingping, a mother who had died when she was nine and a brother. Then a man named San Ya bought her from her father. He wanted her to beg for money and he injured her so her obvious suffering would earn people's sympathy and money. Even then, if she failed to make 200 yuan a day, San Ya would beat her.

San Ya forced three other handicapped children (Longlong, Xiaozi, and Tao Lisha) to beg for him and hired Gong Qingtao, a boy from Gongxiao Village, to supervise them. It turned out to

be a lucrative business. The children earned thousands of yuan for San Ya during six months when he moved them around between Wuhan and Guangzhou. During this time they got little food and no clean clothes. One sick child even died from cold.

Mr. Liu contacted Guangzhou newspaper *Information Times* on January 6 to expose San Ya. Though police found San Ya's nest, a three-story house deeply hidden in a slum in Guangzhou, and rescued the other children, the master was nowhere to be found.

A local trade

In tracing San Ya, reporters discovered that 30 other handicapped children begging in Baiyun District all came from the same source - Gongxiao Village in Taihe County, Anhui.

On arriving at Gongxiao Village on January 13, reporters talked to a local driver who said Gongxiao villagers began to engage in using handicapped children as beggars in the 1990s. They made so much money out of it, the village soon became the richest in Taihe County.

Disabled children were bought or even rented from poor families. Villagers viewed this business as a fair one since the agreement with the children's parents was supposed to include taking care of the kids. Further interviews revealed that the rest of Taihe County was also involved in this business. As for the local government's attitude, some officials claimed there was nothing they could do since so many people were en-

gaged in the business. San Ya was just one of many.

Reporters eventually found the home of the man they thought was Xuanxuan's father, Gong Qingping. He wasn't at home. To the reporters' surprise, the nickname of Gong Qingping was San Ya. Then an old man in the neighborhood told them a secret: Gong Qingping was not Xuanxuan's father.

Traditionally the villagers only call each other by nickname instead of their formal names, so Xuanxuan mistakenly believed her father's name was Gong Qingping. That way, if she got lost or was rescued by the police, she would be sent back to San Ya's house in Gongxiao Village.

Every master of the child beggars in Gongxiao cheated the children in this way. And they had many other tricks up their sleeve. They pretended to be the staff of charity organizations with false documents and cheated local bureaus into giving them the names

of handicapped children.

They chose children under five and made a deal with the parents who were often eager to be rid of the heavy financial burden, as well as believing the children would be better off with these alleged charity organizations. The families were paid around 6,000 yuan per child, but the beggars often earned as much as 10,000 yuan per year for their new masters.

New laws needed

According to statistics from *Legal Daily* on December 18 last year, the number of beggars in China now is more than one million. Figures from the Ministry of Civil Affairs show that in the past three years the number of registered homeless children has been increasing by about 150,000 per year.

China banned career beggars according to The Measures for Internment and Deportation of Urban Vagrants and Beggars, a regulation which was released in May 1982. The reg-

ulation was abolished last year and replaced with new measures for vagrancy in August. But Xie Zhirong, the Guangzhou municipal official in charge of Civil Affairs, said that the new measures do not deal with child beggars like Xuanxuan, who are unable to appeal for help publicly or fight with their masters. And the measures do not stipulate what kind of punishment should be meted out to people like San Ya.

Xie suggested that a new law for child beggars should be promulgated and social funds should be drawn besides the charitable funds gathered by the government to help deal with the children.

Mr. Liu told *Information Times* that the good deeds of random warmhearted people were not the solution to this problem. He said there needed to be more cooperation between government bureaus like the social security and welfare departments. Legislation is also needed to curb the industry, he said.

The children's future

After Xuanxuan's story was revealed, donations poured in from the public to help her find a new life and Guangzhou Friendship Hospital volunteered to treat the other four child beggars for free. After treatment, the children could choose either to go home or to an orphanage. Xuanxuan, Xiaozi and Tao Lisha decided to go to an orphanage. Gong Qingtao and Longlong opted to go back home.

A report by Xinhua News Agency said that in recent years, 128 shelters providing short-term protection and education for street kids have been built in China's big and medium-sized cities.



Residents in Gongxiao Village become the richest in Taihe County, Anhui Province by compelling disabled children to beg

Photos by Long Chengguan / *Information Times*



A handicapped child "claimed" by a begging master



Photo by Philomena Cho

'Artists in Beijing are reacting to the environment, the speed of change, the openness to ideas and exploring issues encountered in everyday life. What could be more valuable than this document of real-life?'

Champion of Chinese Art

By Philomena Cho

Tucked into a small street inside the hip *Dashanzi* art district is one of Beijing's most charming bookstores, Timezone 8. Aiming to support and provide access to modern Chinese art, it's the brainchild of a US citizen, Robert Bernell.

Long road to China

Bernell's journey to Beijing started in his hometown of Fort Worth, Texas, where he was busy learning Spanish. His 22-year long quest to master the Chinese language began one day while at university. "I was a freshman teaching assistant and one day I saw my math professor turn around to this Chinese student who just walked in and converse fluently in Mandarin. I then found out that my professor could read and write Chinese, too. I was floored," recalls Bernell.

Upon confiding to his professor that he planned to earn beer money by doing some summer construction work, the professor told him this would be a waste of time. He advised spending the time learning Chinese instead. "He told me to persuade my parents to fly me to Taipei to study at the Mandarin Language Training Center," he says.

The plan succeeded and Bernell relished the challenge. "I never really thought much of being good at maths because it was easy. Learning Chinese was a real challenge by comparison. I figured that once I'd learned Chinese, then I'd be able to communicate with 80% of the world's population," says Bernell.

Bernell ended up giving up his math studies to earn his undergraduate degree in Chinese Literature and went on to Stanford University to earn his masters in the same subject. After that he went to study at the Nanjing Hopkins Center where he met his future wife, Bian Ge, who was attending the same program, in 1987. Bian Ge and Robert recently celebrated their 15th wedding anniversary.

Business first

Silicon Valley beckoned after graduating, so Bernell worked there until Burston-Marsteller, the global public relations group, found out that he could speak fluent Mandarin. They brought him to Hong Kong in 1991 to handle technology accounts, before he was hired by client Motorola just 18 months later.

As Bernell tells it, "A really wonderful person named Kenny Hirshhorn hired me as business development manager



A family life again



Bernell at the Basel Art Festival

at Motorola and became my mentor for many years. After he left, my wife got transferred to Beijing so I asked for a transfer there also. One of the five Operations Manager positions was open and I ended up getting the job."

He may have got where he wanted, but he still wasn't doing quite what he wanted, which was to continue his long love affair with Chinese contemporary arts. Bernell had collected contemporary Chinese art for many years and frequently commissioned reports from leading curators and critics to serve as market updates. "One day, I looked at all these reports just piling up and thought to myself, 'Gee, it's such a shame that no one else will benefit from these reports'. So I translated them into English and put them onto a website that I created, www.chinese-art.com," he says.

"I brought in guest editors who rotated every two months. They had completely free range in terms of what they wanted to cover," he says. "At that time, critics and historians didn't

feel they had a voice or a place to express their unique perspectives so the idea really clicked," Bernell notes. The site has gone from strength to strength, with London's The Art Newspaper ranking it as one of the top five art sites in the world. It's recognized today as the most comprehensive and authoritative voice on what's happening in the contemporary Chinese art scene.

A deal to sell a share in the site fell through when the dotcom bubble burst in the summer of 2000, so Bernell had to think up other avenues of income generation. "I got the idea to get John Clark and Wu Hong (well-known contemporary Chinese art critics and historians) to organize the website essays into book form. We sold out Wu Hong's first edition in one year, which was unheard of in the publishing business. John Clark's book also sold out in two years," Bernell says.

Artistic expansion

This success led to a new ambition. "From that, I set up Timezone 8 to publish the

books." What's with the name? "There are a lot of issues about what is Chinese art, so the name reflects our decision about what to cover. China's timezone is Greenwich Mean Time plus eight hours, so it means we can cover anything happening in timezone 8. It defined our editorial scope."

Timezone 8 was the first business to open in the now hot 798 Dashanzi Art District. It took more than a little imagination at first, as Bernell recalls being shown the site of his future bookstore in a fairly dubious location. "I'm pretty sure they were trying to get rid of me," he laughingly recalls. "But the price was right, so after a couple of months of getting the place cleaned up, we opened in February 2002."

The early success of the bookstore came as a surprise to Bernell. "There's a real hunger for specialty, technical books. Business was much better than I expected, and more importantly, it's fun. I don't have to travel 70% of the time, I can turn my phone off on weekends, and I can go on family outings on the weekends. I'm really lucky." As to future expansion plans, Bernell says no thanks. "I don't want it to get any bigger because then I'll be chairman and back to doing what I was doing before," he says.

The books of essays sold so well that Bernell secured European and American distributors for the titles. "But every week, critics or curators or students would come into to buy other books. They were

interested in books on international art," he says. "So I decided to take on the third ring of art information to include book retail and distribution." Since expanding into international titles, Timezone 8's database has grown to 1,000 art book titles, with 400-500 new books added every month.

Bernell says the shop draws an interesting selection of consumers; "95% are young, hip locals who are very aware of urban culture and constantly looking for more. They have very sophisticated responses and they're very aware of what's happening. They'll have an opinion about a show that just opened in Italy last week. So the problem of access to detailed information is where we come in."

Recently, Bernell has launched a bi-monthly theme in the bookstore with Art Now and Photography Now completed and Architecture Now, Design Now and Cinema Now next. "Each theme brings in tons of new titles. By the end of the year, we'll have a more complete title list for the five categories but of course there are so many sub-categories," he says.

Opening up

Bernell feels there's increasing global recognition of the Beijing art scene. "Saskia Sassen's book *Global Cities*, very influential in art circles, says the concept of first world/third world or national borders is misleading. What exists instead is a network of global cities which have a lot

in common, like diversity of culture and social life. Sassen gives us the philosophical platform to communicate the broader reality of China by focusing on the urban experience, which is so different from the global image of China."

"Artists in Beijing are reacting to the environment, the speed of change, the openness to ideas and exploring issues encountered in everyday life. What could be more valuable than this document of real-life?" he says.

"The world is taking notice. Most large-scale exhibitions worldwide involve Chinese artists. There were 35 Chinese artists at the last Venice Biennale, and at the previous one a Chinese artist walked away with the top prize. The curator of the last Biennale, Harold Szeeman, said there was an element of poetry and subversion in Chinese art that he hadn't seen since the 1960s," Bernell adds.

"This year in June, New York's International Center of Photography will devote its entire space to Chinese photography. It's one milestone after another, gathering momentum so China finally takes its place on the world cultural scene. This change in mentality is producing a very vital art scene here," he says.

Bernell is definitely optimistic about the future for Chinese contemporary arts. "There's an international awakening afoot, increasing interest in urban cultures in Asia and particularly China."



Customres browse the shelves at Timezone 8.



The extended family

Photos provided by Robert Bernell

A Long Way from Longmen

Efforts to reunite the heads of two statues currently on display in Beijing with their bodies at Longmen Grottoes have so far proven fruitless

By Qin Wen/Zhang Huan

On July 5 last year, 76-year-old American Chinese Chen Jingzhe brought 16 statues of the Buddha to China for an exhibition of precious cultural relics at the Beijing Hotel. Among them are two heads that are confirmed to have come from the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan Province. The heads were stolen from Longmen at some time prior to 1921.

One head belongs to the Sakyamuni Buddha in Gaoshu Niche in the Guyang Grotto, which contained statues of the Buddha carved during the Northern Wei Dynasty (368-534). The other is the head of an attending Bodhisattva standing left to the main Buddha in the Huoding Grotto.

Six months later, the two heads are still on display at the Beijing Hotel, no closer to being returned to their homes at the Longmen Grottoes.

A passion for collecting

Chen Jingzhe, who now lives in Hong Kong, once studied sculpture in Shanghai under Zhang Yunren and later learned painting and calligraphy and the identification of ancient paintings from Liu Bonian and Lai Chusheng. He moved to Hong Kong in the 1950s and then went to Los Angeles, where he earned a living making wax statuettes for TV and film celebrities. During that time, he began collecting Chinese statues of Buddha.

In 1991, Chen bought from an Ameri-

can private collector the head of a statue from the Northern Wei Dynasty. From the shape of the face and the design of the dress, he determined it was from the Longmen Grottoes. It was at that time that Chen gave up sculpting, saying, "I suddenly felt it was much more important to preserve those statues of Buddha than it was to make my own."

Towards the end of 1991, Chen sent pictures of the statue to Tang Chi, a professor of art history at the Central Academy of Fine Arts, who had taken students to sketch at Longmen many times and was familiar with the varied styles of each grotto. On seeing the pictures, Tang immediately recognized that it was a lost statue from Guyang Grotto. In October 1992, Chen, armed with more pictures, travelled to Longmen where he visited Wen Yucheng, the then honorary head of the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute, and expressed his hope to cooperate with the research institute to identify the subjects of the photos. Wen appointed Wang Zhenguo, a research fellow, to accompany Chen in conducting the investigation.

It took Chen and Wang only ten days to confirm that the first statue was the head of the main Buddha in the Gaoshu Niche of the Guyang Grotto. The Gaoshu Niche lies in the upper part of the northern wall of the grotto, and is named after the head of the Buddhist organization that funded its construction. In the niche sits a statue of Sakyamuni, to



The Buddha head from Gaoshu Niche, its body and the computer-generated reunion

whom the head belongs.

Chen then departed, but Wang continued to conduct an overall survey on the grottoes over the following three months. In the course of this survey, he found that another head of a statue that Chen had photographed was that of a Bodhisattva in Huoding Grotto.

Priceless relics

According to Wang, of the some 100,000 statues that once stood in the Longmen Grottoes, only around ten percent remain. Most of those that are missing were looted between 1918 and 1935, many of which were subsequently sold abroad. Of these, a mere 50 to 60 in museums around the world are confirmed to have come from Longmen.

The Longmen Grottoes were originally established in the Northern Wei Dynasty, but subsequently destroyed the Northern Zhou Dynasty (557-581). In the following centuries, the grottoes were destroyed and rebuilt many times. It was not until the Ming Dynasty that concerted efforts were

made to preserve them.

Seeking the statues' return

It is said that in 1992 when Chen was leaving Luoyang after identifying one of the heads, he was given a big send-off dinner. At the dinner, a local official asked him to donate the heads to Longmen. After a moment's consideration, Chen allegedly agreed, asking only that the Longmen side handle all the customs formalities. Chen later took the statues from America to Hong Kong, but heard nothing further about the customs permit.

In 2001, Beijing antique dealer Ju Xiaonan heard about Chen's statues and got in contact with him. Chen and Ju signed an agreement in which Chen entrusted his collection of over 200 statues of the Buddha to Ju, who agreed to sell them for Chen for a commission. Since then, Chen has refused to discuss the issue publicly.

In 2003, the Administrative Bureau of the Longmen Grottoes contacted Ju, expressing the hope that the cultural

relics could be returned to Longmen. Ju responded that Chen would not donate the statues and offered to sell them for US \$500,000.

Han Yuling, vice director of the administrative bureau said, "We do not expect Chen to donate the statues, but \$500,000 is too much." Ju countered that the price was low compared with the actual value of the statues and said the price was set by both Chen and himself, adding that Chen now lacks financial resource and lives a difficult life.

The administrative bureau and Ju have both made a report to the national government, urging that the government help purchase the relics, but the problem is still the money. Qu Shengrui, an official from the State Administration of Cultural Heritage commented, "The more the media pay attention to the case, the higher the price of the statues will be. The state cannot be expected to pay such a high price, but it will be the state that suffers the loss."



The Bodhisattva head from Huoding Grotto, its body and the computer-generated reunion

Photos provided by Chen Jing

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Unknown and Anonymous

By Darlene Lee

The Long March project, brainchild of curator Lu Jie and co-curator Qiu Zhijie, launched on July 1, 2002. The project aims to retrace the steps of its historical predecessor, creating and exhibiting contemporary art from around the world at over 20 sites in China.

Lu first got the idea to create a moving exhibition around the theme of the Long March while studying at London's Goldsmiths College. His time there allowed him to "re-examine revolutionary memory from an international context," he says. With an image of himself as a traveler, Lu struck upon the Long March in his search for an organic structure which would allow him to include the many issues connected to contemporary Chinese art. "In every Chinese mind," Lu says, "the Long March is the narration, the story of beginning from conflict, the rupture with tradition, the problem with modernity and then the search for utopia."

Although Lu sees the future of contemporary Chinese art as one of "continuing systematization and institutionalization, getting exhausted, increasingly commercial", he is motivated rather than resigned. "We need to march on to make more people hear our voice. The Long March is not only a metaphor but also a critique, and a platform where more alternative and creative, constructive things will give birth," he says.

Coming to a temporary rest after 12 stops, the 25000 Cultural Transmission Center (CTC) in the Dashanzi Art District opened to house the project. Attracting over 10,000 visitors since opening, CTC now opens Phase 4: Unknown and Anonymous. Involving both artists who were on the march as well as newcomers, Phase 4 seeks to empower authorship. "Instead of just bringing famous folk artists to exhibit, we seek to raise the perceived value of authorship whether we happen to know who the author is or not," explains Lu.

Artists like Guo Fengyi and Wang Wenhai have been with the Project since the beginning and have created new works for Phase 4. "The idea of seeing how artists evolved through their involvement with the project naturally lent itself to having several exhibition phases. Like with the march, we are just following the road," notes Lu.

Wang's Mao-themed work explored conventional public impressions of Mao in phase 1, his own understanding of Mao iconography in phase 2, relations to Buddhist imagery in phase 3 and brings folk art language to monumental heights in his phase 4 work – a 3.48 meter tall fiberglass sculpture of Mao. Guo's new drawing work explores both the impact of SARS as well as eastern reinterpretations of western pop icons.

Noted contemporary artist Wang Jingsong's sound installation entitled Long March Slogans will show with two works Lu picked up at Beijing's Panjiayuan flea market. As Lu notes in his press release, "Works by unknown and anonymous artists flood our visual culture and are constantly consumed by the market. Contemporary artists are also part of the market system, but at the same time, they carry the heavy burden of being responsible for reconstructing culture."



(Left to right) Qiu Zhijie, Wang Wenhai & wife, Lu Jie in front of Wang's Yan'an cave studio



Lu Jie's Panjiayuan Flea Market finds

As part of Phase 4, Lu has created a Long March Space in cave dwelling in Yan'an, Shanxi province, near the bank of Yellow River. As Lu describes it, the caves are "an art space among the people in a remote village. Yan'an symbolized revolution and Mao's revolutionary theory of art for the people. The cave space will create opportunities for local folk artists to exchange ideas with professional artists from all over China."

Lu sees Phase 4 as addressing key issues in Chinese contemporary art today, "Artists/ market systems/ exhibition systems, unknown/ anonymous/ collective: these two sets can be explored merely as contrasts, but the relationship contained within and between the sets have profound meaning in China's visual culture. In this exhibition especially, we display works created under different authorship circumstances to explore the relationship between artists, the market and exhibition systems. In China's historical and revolutionary traditions, there are many masterpieces with collective, unknown and anonymous creators. They are a main element in public discourse."

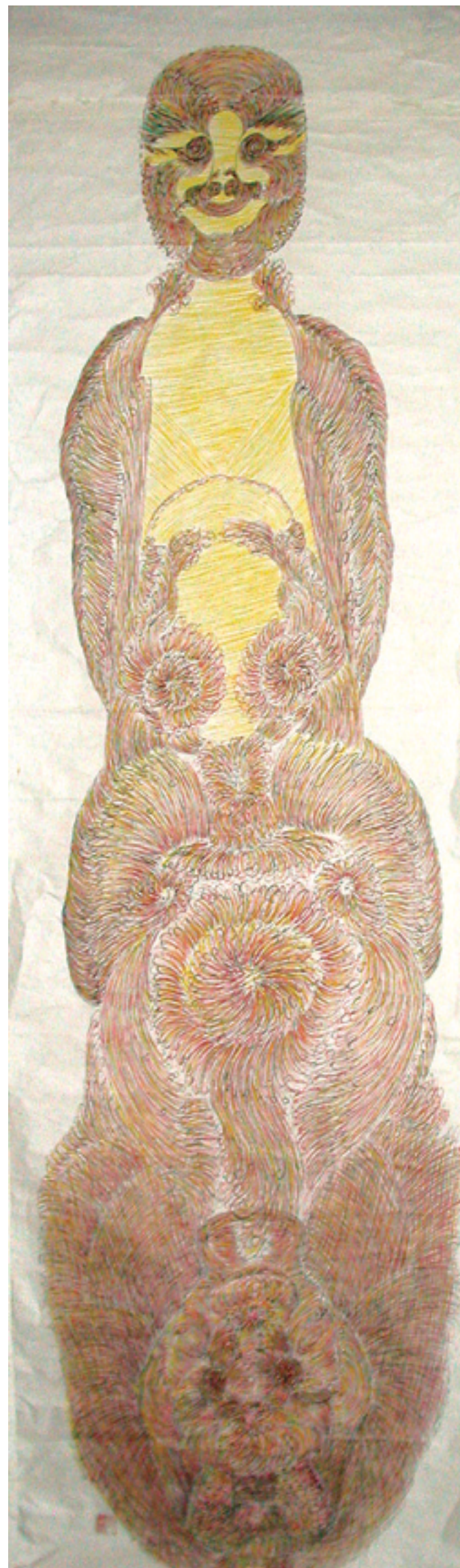
Lu's clear-thinking provides a strong basis for the project, "The Long March explores multiple issues. First, are the pros and cons of directly exporting contemporary Chinese art "from inside-out" to international exhibitions and markets. Second, is the way in which Chinese contemporary art superficially adopts practices of the international art system without criticism. Western practices are adopted though they may not be suitable for contemporary Chinese art and may, in fact, be harmful. Third, are the continuous discussions of post-colonial theory without developing or adding anything new to the theoretical debate. The fifth issue involves the tension and gap between the idealism of the newly-formed Dashanzi Art Zone and the surrounding community."

The project moves towards a positive resolution of these issues by creating dialogue space. As Lu notes, "The Long March Space exists as a ground to balance these issues. Its focus is to contextualize the lives of Chinese artists through their works. Personal space, individualism and social environment are an inseparable part of the lives of the four folk artists participating in the current exhibition. They challenge our conception of what defines an 'artist'."

Lu's aims in terms of the effects of the Long March Project are lofty, "We hope that the public's adoption of contemporary artistic language and the representation of their life and art from a contemporary perspective can create a dialogue focusing on 'what is art and what is contemporary'."

Look forward to Phase 5 starting in March, which features famed contemporary Chinese sculptor Liang Suo. "Although we started with mostly unknown folk artists, we seem to be finishing with more well-known contemporary artists," Lu observes. "It isn't intentional, it's just how it's happening. In a way, it confirms the original impetus for the project, creating a place where topics can be tabled for the artists willing to engage in them," concludes Lu.

Images, artist profiles and other information are available at www.longmarchfoundation.org.



Budhidarma by Guo Fengyi Photos provided by Long March Foundation

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Pure Motion

By Darlene Lee

Nearly half a century after its first China performance in front of Premier Zhou Enlai, Rambert Dance Company returned to Beijing's Tianqiao Theater last weekend for its 2004 China Tour (the final event of the Think UK program). "Think UK is organized by the British Government and the British Council to show all the ways in which modern Britain can offer partnership to people, especially young people, in China," notes Sir Christopher Hume, British Ambassador to China, in the program introduction.

Hailing from all over Britain as well as Argentina, Spain, Australia, Germany, New Zealand, Canada, France and Hong Kong, the company's 20 dancers treated the nearly-packed hall to a fluid, technically-demanding and top-notch evening of contemporary dance. The evening's four-part program featured: *21*,



Performance by Rambert Dance Company

Photo by Cui Jun

Visions Fugitive, Living Toys and Pre-Sentient.

Choreographer Rafeal Bonachela was inspired to create the intricate contrapuntal movements of *21* based on his working experience with multinational pop star Kylie Minogue. Subtle rhythms in lighting showcased the dancers' movements against the backdrop of Kylie's digitized voice. Hans va Manen set his

work *Visions Fugitive* to the score of Sergei Prokofiev, featuring quirky duets and humor in the details. Special mention goes to Leeds native Paul Liburd who shone in this number.

Dressed in white-pieced costumes reminiscent of mariottes, the entire company took to the stage with bold patterns in Karole Armitage's *Living Toys*. Featuring variations of

the fast movement series first pioneered by Merce Cunningham, Living Toys made light of an otherwise almost sinister-sounding score. The lilac-colored tunics of PreSentient, choreographed by Wayne McGregor, complemented the daring yet seductive movements of this piece as well as showing to best advantage the graceful physiques and physical power of the company's dancers.

Britain's oldest dance company, Rambert was established by Polish dance pioneer Marie Rambert in 1926 as a ballet company. Changing its focus to include contemporary dance in 1967, it formally changed its name from Ballet Rambert to Rambert Dance Company in 1987. In addition to being Britain's first dance company to perform in China (also at Tianqiao Theatre in 1957), Rambert premiered contemporary dance at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow when it performed there in August of last year.

The Rambert Dance Company's China Tour was co-presented by the Milky Way Arts and Communications Company and the Cultural and Education Section of the British Embassy including sponsors: B&Q, BP, GlaxoSmithKline, Shell and Thames Water.

Cui Jian to Perform in Rock Musical

By Dong Nan

Godfather of Chinese rock 'n' roll, Cui Jian, is teaming up with Udo Lindenberg, hailed as the Godfather of German rock'n'roll, to perform in a musical called *Atlantic Story*.

Cui commented in a press release that liked the musical's style and reflective mood. "It is not only a historical retrospective, but also a call for peace," he said. He will perform four songs in the show, one of them a duo with Lindenberg.

Atlantic Story is set in Germany in the 1930s, and tells the story of how many renowned German artists, including Thomas Mann, Bertold Brecht, Billy Wilder and Kurt Weill fled to New York and Shanghai, seeking refuge from Nazi persecution. All the songs were popular during the 1920's and 1930's, but have been reincarnated as rock'n'roll.

The musical will be staged in Shanghai on February 27 and in Beijing on March 4, after which the cast flies to Germany.

Meanwhile, Cui's long awaited new album: *Nongcun Baowei Chengshi (Villages Besiege Cities)* is now in the final stages of mixing and set for release in spring. It will be the rock veteran's fifth album, and follows 1998's *Wuneng de Liliang (The Power of the Powerless)*.



Cui Jian (left) and Udo Lindenberg

Rock Review

Convenience Store



Convenience Store

By Dong Nan

After half of a year of promotion and touring, *Bianli Shangdian* (Convenience Store) - Modern Sky's latest band of the moment - released their debut album *Five Stars* early this year.

The five handsome and energetic young men, with an average age of 23, first got together in 2001. When asked to name their favorite bands, the almost unanimous reply is Travis and Radiohead, followed by Suede, Blur and Coldplay, all of which are obvious influences.

Lead singer Guo Shuo's voice is somewhat reminiscent of U2's Bono. As he states in his self-introduction, "I cannot play guitar, but I am a clever singer; and my songs might not be the

best, but they are sure to make you feel good."

The new album, showing proficiency and the ability to pen catchy songs occasionally crosses the line between influence and imitation, and has won the band both plaudits and brickbats, however Guo's stated dream when he formed the band - "to be a rock star" - seems to be coming true.

Line up:

Vocal: Guo Shuo (Monkey Guo) Guitar: Lang Lei, Du Wei Bass: Zhang Weilin Drums: De Heng

Five Stars (2004)

Recommendations: *Chufa, Xiboliya (Go for Siberia), Yuehui (Dating), Dikong Feixing (Fly in Low Altitude)*

WORLDWIDE



The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

Lord, Master Dominate Oscar Nominations

A pack of newcomers rose to the rank of Oscar nominee on Tuesday as epic *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* claimed the title of most-nominated film for the US film industry's top honors.

Rings, directed by New Zealand's Peter Jackson, scored 11 Academy Award nominations, including a spot among the contestants for the year's best film and Jackson's name in the race for best director.

The epic film based on the third in the trilogy of J.R.R. Tolkien novels about the battle for Middle Earth was joined on the list of best picture nominees by seafaring adventure *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*, crime thriller *Mystic River*, horse-racing tale *Seabiscuit*, and *Lost in Translation*, about two disenchanted Americans in Tokyo. (Reuters)



Charlize Theron

Theron Seduces Hollywood as Man Killer

After building a career as a glamour model and svelte screen siren, Charlize Theron hit the Hollywood big time with an Oscar nomination on Tuesday for playing an overweight prostitute turned serial killer.

It is a long way from her childhood on a farm in apartheid South Africa, but Theron is no stranger to violence.

When she was 15 her mother Gerda shot dead her alcoholic father Charles in self defense when he came home in a drunken rage threatening to shoot his wife and daughter. (Reuters)

Martha Stewart's Stock Sale Trial Opens

Martha Stewart lied to investigators and committed "serious federal crimes" by selling off nearly 4,000 shares of stock based on a tip no one else had, a federal prosecutor charged Tuesday. But the defense said the case was based on mere speculation and guesswork.

As opening statements got under way in federal court, Assistant US Attorney Karen Patton Seymour told jurors that Stewart had lied to federal agents, and "multiplied that lie by feeding it to investors in her own company. She was told a secret that no other investor had," Seymour said.

One count accused Stewart of deliberately trying to prop up the stock of her domestic lifestyle company, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, by saying in 2002 that she had done nothing wrong and was cooperating with investigators. (AP)



Martha Stewart

Former Tonight Show Host Jack Paar Dies

Jack Paar, who held the nation's rapt attention as he pioneered late-night talk on *The Tonight Show*, then told his viewers farewell when still in his prime, died Tuesday. He was 85.

Paar died at his home as a result of a long illness, said Stephen Wells, Paar's son-in-law.

"Jack invented the talk show format as we know it: the ability to sit down and make small talk big. I will miss him terribly," Merv Griffin said. "Not only was he a great friend, he was my beginning, just as he was everyone else's." (AP)

Edited by Dong Nan



Jack Paar in 1991

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Accessories for Spring

By Wang Xiaoxiao

As Beijing's very cold winter warms up a bit, now is the time to start creating your new spring look. The increasing number of international brands available in Beijing means you don't have to wait to go to Hong Kong to shop anymore.

TOUGH Jeans

Tucked into a shop on level BB1 is TOUGH. Getting its start in Hong Kong a decade ago, TOUGH now boasts shops in: Japan, Australia, Spain, Italy, Germany, Singapore and Malaysia.

First established with quirky bags designed to express individuality, TOUGH has expanded into sweaters, belts and watches. The highly functional bags live up to their name with decorative metal to create its trademark look.

"Our customers are mainly young people who aren't afraid to express their personalities. Famous movie or music stars are often seen in our shops," says Guan Jing, manager of TOUGH in the Malls at New Oriental Plaza.

Bags, the core products, come in black and military green. From tiny waist bags

Fu Jing Tel: 85188817 Open: 9:30 am - 9:30 pm NaRaYa

In contrast to the hardy, practical ambience of TOUGH, NaRaYa is an idyllic romp through a gaudy, multi-coloured wonderland where everything is shiny. Bags span the rainbow colors, often combining many in the same item. Even black or dark-colored bags give off a bright sheen.

Launched in Thailand 10 years ago, NaRaYa started with handbags made from striped or checked cotton cloth as well as Thai silk.

Solid-colored bags try for a more sedate look while whimsical patterns of ladybugs, little yellow flowers



Handbag, 78 yuan each

and elephants are more suitable for little girls.

Mr. Pan, manager of NaRaYa, told *Beijing Today* that there are over 100 handbag styles with each style available in a wide range of colors and patterns. Prices range from 48 to 260 yuan.

Rounding out its massive selection of bags are jewelry boxes and cosmetic bags. Available in various little shapes, these boxes and bags are outdone in kitschy cuteness only by their cotton toys (featuring elephants and bears).

Where: BB40, the Malls at New Oriental Plaza **Open:** 9:30 am - 9:30 pm



TOUGH Wallets and watches

to hefty backpacks, they're designed to meet any fashion need (RMB200 to 1000).

Unique accessories make TOUGH bags even more special. Take the Lockman, an exclusive bag lock. Made of synthetic material, the lock is as hard as metal but transparent. Users set their own password and the wire tying up the bag zipper is made of stainless steel so it's not just pretty to look at (RMB172).

The Emergency Note, designed for mountaineering and other outdoor sports, can add a decorative touch in choice of blue or red colors. Belts range from 200 to 500 yuan, purses from 200 to 500 yuan and watches from 800 to 1200 yuan.

Where: BB1, the Malls at New Oriental Plaza, Wang

Chinese opera characters made from clay, 30 yuan each



Folk Arts Revive the Spirit of Old Beijing

By Zhang Ran

Whether reminiscing about the folk arts from childhood, looking for a way for your kids to learn about tradition or just looking to find out more about the spirit of Old Beijing, there is a perfect place to go: Sheng Tang Xuan.

Owner 83-year old Tang Qiliang, a Manchu, started making toys 70 years ago and has continued to perfect his craft. Made from fleece, paper, clay and bamboo; the family became so well-known for its fleece toys that they earned the nickname "Fleece Tang".

A variety of motifs derived from ancient history, classical drama, legends and folk tales feature in these toys. The end result is a charmingly primitive



Afu, 50 yuan each



Horse-drawn Carriage, 220 yuan

simplicity, using bold elements to create an authentic old Beijing spirit.

Typical fleece toys feature tigers, camels, monkeys, cats and dogs. A small donkey comes with a clay millstone. Hand-crafted wooden coaches bring us back to earlier times where colors, decorations and forms differentiate between those for the emperor, for nobles and for the common people.

Traditional symbolism is woven into the simple toys. The monkey riding a horse confers favor from high: with the horse symbolizing good fortune and the homonym of monkey and marquis doubling the luck. Gold and treasures carried by a horse signified fortunes to be



Cloth Dolls, 50 yuan each

made. Yet other toys call to mind the simple idyllic pleasures of Old Beijing: chickens pecking seeds and animals pulling wagons. Through the carefully-made toys of simple materials, the spirit of Old Beijing returns to us again.

Where: No.38, Guozijian Street, Dongcheng District. **Tel:** 64002303 **Open:** 9:00 am - 7:00 pm

Imperial Luxury

By Li Sha

The masses of Ke silk fabric set in an opulent interior risks overwhelming the senses through sheer brightness. Welcome to Emperor, where the *nouveau riche* are sure to find something to recreate the splendor of imperial China in their own homes.

Ke silks, woven with a difficult technique known as Kesi, originated from Suzhou thousands of years ago. Made through difficult precision needlework, each piece of Ke silk takes months to complete and then is further embroidered with flower, plant and dragon designs.

Store founder Zhang Xuemei, a graduate of Tsinghua's Fine Arts School, designs all the patterns by herself. Her innovative creations

draw from ancient Chinese characters in a bid to bring the grandeur of ancient civilization into the modern day.

A tabletop piece, measuring 2.45 meters by 0.35 meters, uses millions of gold threads to create its blindingly brilliant flower pattern to life. Thin as a cicada's wing while sparkling like a diamond, this masterpiece recalls the heirlooms of the ancient royals and will cost you a fortune at 16,800 yuan.

Bedding, bags, cushions and tablecloths all feature unique patterns and colors. To bring a bit of this over-the-top opulence home without spending a king's ransom,

consider the exquisitely crafted chopstick covers at just 23 yuan per pair. Prices for other items range from hundreds to thousands of yuan.

Where: Oriental Plaza, AA12, No 1, East Changan Street **Tel:** 85186148 **Open:** 9:30 am - 9:30 pm



Pumpkin-shaped cushions, 480 yuan each

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How Frozen Dumplings Stack Up

Beijing Today volunteer tester gorging on frozen dumplings.

Start the New Year Light and Right

By Joel Kirkhart

Across cultures, holidays are times for indulgence and excess. Whether you've been gorging on ham, cake and wine or *jiaozi*, Beijing duck and *baijiu*; it's likely your waistline has expanded and you're feeling less healthy these days than just a few weeks ago.

As the holiday season winds down, now is the perfect time to start keeping those New Year's resolutions to get healthy. Fortunately, eating light does not have to be painful – all it takes is giving a little more thought to what goes in your mouth and making careful choices.

Healthier eating gets tricky when dining out since you can't completely control what goes into your food. Some tasty restaurant favorites – namely, those that are deep fried – need to be completely given up except as very rare treats. A case in point is *gongbao jiding*, or kungpao chicken. This beloved dish can pack 70+ grams of fat per serving, equal to nearly 70 percent of a healthy adult's daily fat requirement.

Healthy basic ingredients like vegetables, fish or lean pork can be betrayed by sauces chock full of oil and salt. In these cases, chopsticks promote healthier eating by forcing diners to lift morsels out of the calorie-laden sauce.

Though easier to eat healthy when cooking at home, some basic rules will help you cook more healthily. Instead of stir-frying or sautéing dishes, try steaming them. Use minimal oil when stir-frying and splash water or broth into the pan to keep things from sticking. Use olive, canola (rapeseed) or peanut oil. The latter is particularly popular for stir-fries because of its nutty taste and ability to take the heat of fast wok cooking. Use discretion to keep things healthy. A cool and effective way to minimize oil use while cooking is to put your oil into a spray bottle – one spritz is enough oil to cover a pan. Non-stick cookware is also a must.

Regardless of cooking method, eating healthy every day means cutting back on meat. Even in the winter, that should not present a real problem in Beijing, as local markets are stocked with a huge variety of vegetable and tofu options. Fish and shellfish are good choices, and for those times when nothing but meat will do, go for lean cuts, such as pork tenderloin (*zhu liji*) and chicken breast.

To stay healthy and trim down after a gluttonous winter, here are a few tips:

*** Slow down:** Eating slower is easier on your system and allows the body to generate enzymes that tell your brain you've had enough.

*** Exercise:** Most of us dread this, but it's hard to be healthy and lose weight without it. Remember, just a half hour walk a day is enough to get the heart pumping and raise your metabolism to speed slimming.

*** Make some adjustments:** Give up full or even 2 percent fat milk for pure skim. No more *fangbianmian*. Cook up two egg whites instead of one complete egg. Avoid sugar-filled sodas and fruit juice drinks.

*** Cut back on alcohol:** Booze in all forms is chock full of calories. When you do indulge, a glass of water before and after each drink can help slow the pace of your elbow-bending.

*** Don't go out hungry:** Whether you're headed to a restaurant or a family or friend's house for a holiday feast, leaving home hungry makes you more likely to pig out when you reach your destination. Before heading out the door, eat an apple or two, or some high-fiber vegetables, such as carrots, celery or a salad.

By Joel Kirkhart

In Beijing and throughout most of northern China, it would not be Spring Festival without heaps of fresh, home-made *jiaozi* (dumplings). Families sit around the table enjoying the time-consuming process of wrapping these little stuffed symbols of unity, but there are times when there simply isn't time to make *jiaozi* by hand. One admittedly paltry option is to reach for the pre-packaged, frozen variety.

Who can claim to never have resorted to a meal of frozen *jiaozi* at some point? Cheap, easy and filling; they are China's ultimate bachelor food. Yet, not all frozen dumplings are made of the same stuff. In time for the rushed holiday season, a few *Beijing Today* staff and two other volunteers conducted a less-than-scientific taste test of five brands on the market to determine the best *jiaozi*. We learned that: a) one person should never eat more than 30 dumplings in one sitting; and b) some products are good, but none compare to homemade. As one tester noted, "All frozen *jiaozi* taste like this."

The *jiaozi* tested were filled with pork and cabbage (*zhurou dabaicai*) or a rough equivalent in one case. Testers evaluated the dumplings for: look, wrapper, filling and flavor, giving cumulative marks from zero to a high of five for a total possible score of 20. Without any further ado, here are the results:

No. 5: Duolingduo brand; 6.5 points; 12.8 yuan for one kilogram

While similar in appearance to the others tested (small and thickly-wrapped), these were universally panned. Despite having more filling than some rivals, the main strike against them was inconsistent quality and an overpowering ginger flavor. This analysis was confirmed when one tester spat out a sizeable chunk of the root.

No. 4: Lushanchuan; 9 points; 9.2 yuan for 300 grams

This *jiaozi*'s pork was mixed not with cabbage but with wild greens, a combination one tester hated so much he scored it zero. Billed as "green food," meaning these dumplings are pesticide and pollution free, they were also low on satisfying flavor and high on oil content. While containing plenty of pork, no one liked their strong aftertaste – even those who didn't mind the wild greens in question.

No. 3: Longfeng; 12 points; 14.9 yuan for one kilogram

The first dumpling tested fell right in the middle of the pack. One tester judged, "These are great – but then I didn't have lunch." Others were more reserved. Like No. 5, the wrappers were too thick and the dumplings themselves too small. The cabbage inside was also rated as insufficiently juicy.

No. 2: Sanquanling; 15 points; 5.8 yuan for 500 grams

"Now, these taste of cabbage," noted one tester. Everyone agreed that the flavor of these dumplings was fine, but the filling was skimpy and the meat subdued. That may, however, have been because the host "boiled the @#\$!t out of them," as another testy tester quipped.

The Winner: Wanzai Matou; 18 points; 18.9 yuan for 960 grams

This brand has chiseled out a secure spot at the highest end of the frozen *jiaozi* market, and our testers agreed that they are worth the extra cash. Not only did they look the best (though definitely still not like mom's), they were praised for tasting fresh with wrappings made from good flour. However, some contained unappetizing chunks of gristle. All in all, these are superior frozen *jiaozi*, but still do not hold a candle to homemade.

Soupy Sticky Sweets

By James Liu

As Beijing returns to work, the Spring Festival winds to an end with the Yuanxiao Festival. Also known as the Lantern Festival, the event falls on the 15th day of the first month on the lunar calendar (February 5 this year). *Yuan* means "first" while *xiao* means "night." Together, the two characters refers to the first time that the full moon is seen in the New Year.



Sinian brand, Yuzhenzhu series

The highlight of the Festival are the small dumplings which must be eaten on this night (also called *yuanxiao*). Made of glutinous rice flour with fillings that range from red bean paste to minced meat; *yuanxiao* symbolize family unity, completeness and happiness.

Either sweet or salty, savory *yuanxiao* contain minced meat, vegetables or a mixture of the two. Sweet fillings are made of sugar, walnuts, sesame, osmanthus flowers (*guihua*), rose petals, sweetened tangerine peel, bean paste, or jujube paste. A single ingredient or any combination can be used as the filling.

Predictably, northerners and southerners make *yuanxiao* differently. In the south, the rice flour dough is shaped into balls. Then a hole is made, the filling inserted, the hole closed

and the dumpling made smooth by rolling it between the palms of both hands. In the north, sweet or non-meat stuffing predominates. The fillings are pressed into hardened balls which are dipped lightly in water and

rolled around in a flat basket containing dry glutinous rice flour. After the filling acquires a layer of flour, it's dipped again in water and rolled again in rice flour. This process continues until the dumpling attains the desired size. With neither method particularly fast or easy, most people nowadays resort to buying pre-made *yuanxiao*.

Most packaged *yuanxiao* contain sweet fillings. Black sesame is the most popular flavor followed

by walnuts, chestnuts and chocolate. Testers from *Beijing Today* collected the major brands of frozen sweet *yuanxiao* to evaluate them for: appearance, stickiness, sweetness and flavor.

Yuanxiao received cumulative marks from zero to a high of five for a total possible score of 20. Here are the results.

No. 1: Wanzai Matou Black Sesame; 19 points; 9.9 yuan for 600 grams

Like its fellow dumplings, this brand of *yuanxiao* also wins highest marks from the testers. Appropriate sweetness and stickiness along with a smooth in-mouth texture and a strong sesame flavor deliver good value for money. This *yuanxiao* also performs well even if over-boiled. The only flaw



Photos by Li Shuzhuan / Wenlong

is a slightly greasy taste from the sesame oil.

No. 2: Sinian brand, black sesame filling; 15 points; 6.4 yuan for 400 grams

Though featuring a thinner wrapping and stronger sesame flavor than the winner, the wrappers lost their pristine whiteness after cooking and did not stand up well to over-boiling. The level of stickiness and sweetness were acceptable.

No. 3: Sanquanling brand, black sesame with low sugar content; 12 points; 5.1 yuan for 400 grams

Despite the too-thick wrapper, the stickiness and filling were acceptable. The low sugar content appealed to healthier-minded testers.

No. 4: Sinian brand, Yuzhenzhu series with sesame filling; 11 points; 5.2 yuan for 300 grams

The smallest individually sized *yuanxiao*, they nonetheless managed a strong sesame taste and smooth mouth-feel. Insufficiently sticky, the filling was also too sweet. One notable benefit of these tiny *yuanxiao* was the speed with which they cooked.

No. 5: Longfeng brand, chestnut with bean paste filling; 10 points; 4.6 yuan for 200 grams

Although the stickiness levels and wrapper of this brand were acceptable, the filling tastes rough in the mouth and was insufficiently sweet. The chestnut flavor was the best of the lot in this brand.

No. 6: Longfeng brand, Chocolate filling; 9 points; 4.5 yuan for 200 grams

A good smooth taste with an appropriately sticky wrapper, this *yuanxiao* fell down on taste. The chocolate flavor was barely noticeable, even if the *yuanxiao* could stand a bit of over-cooking.

No. 7: Sanquanling brand, extra size with sesame filling; 7.5 points; 7.1 yuan for 500 grams

As big as a *pingpong* ball, this *yuanxiao* features an extra thick wrapper and enough sugar to make one's teeth ache. Despite being far too sweet in the sesame flavor, the peanut filling was a welcome surprise.



Wanzai Matou Black Sesame filling



Sinian brand, black sesame filling



Longfeng brand, chestnut with bean paste filling



Longfeng brand, Chocolate filling



Wanzai Matou Black Sesame filling



Sanquanling brand, extra size with sesame filling

DJ DELTA revisits the hits of the 80s: Depeche Mode, The Cure, David Bowie, Billy Idol, Talking Heads, Tears for Fears, Iggy Pop, Sex Pistols and much more.

Where: Vibes, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Dashanzi When: January 31, 10 pm Admission: free Tel: 6437 8082

'80s Rock



Movies



Wuyue Bayue (May And August)

May and her big sister, August, are too small to understand the nightmare devastating their city in 1937. When the Japanese invade Nanjing, the two sisters dwell instead in a child's fantasy. They sing, play with their dog and admire the butterflies in their little friend's braided hair. While they laugh inside the cozy walls of their home, the occupying army slaughters their neighbors outside. Directed by Du Kewei, the movie stars Xu Qichen, Qiu Lier, Lin Quan, Ye Tong

Where: Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** January 30, 31, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 139 0113 4745



Fei Ying (Silver Hawk)

The legendary female hero who fought for justice, Wong Ngung, became a popular subject of black-and-white films in the 1960s. Many of the top actresses of the time portrayed her. Michelle Yeoh continues the tradition in this version, set in the year 2009. This is the first contemporary film about Wong Ngung to be made in putonghua. Directed by Jingle Ma, the movie stars Michelle Yeoh and Richie Ren

Where: cinemas across town **When:** till February 7

Mastertnd Commander: The Far Side of the World

Based on one of the 20 Napoleonic War-era adventure novels of author Patrick O'Brian's Master and Commander series, the movie stars Russell Crowe as Captain Jack Aubrey and Paul Bettany as ship-surgeon Stephen Maturin. A high-seas adventurer, Aubrey takes his ship, the HMS Surprise, to defend Britain against Napoleon's invading forces.

Where: cinemas across town **When:** till February 7 **Huidao Fenghuangqiao (Back to Phoenix Bridge)**

A documentary about four girls who go back to their hometown after living in Beijing. Directed by Li Hong.

Where: Hart Salon, 17 Sanlitun South Bar Street, Chaoyang **When:** January 31, 8 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan (includes a drink) **Tel:** 6504 6010

Music

Lantern Festival Music

On February 5, the Lantern Festival, the Traditional Music Orchestra of China National Song and Dance Ensemble performs Huahao Yueyyuan (Beautiful Flowers and Full Moon) to celebrate the day. Appropriate to this festival, all program music features good luck, peace and happiness as themes.

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall, inside Zhongshan Park, Xi Chang'an Jie **When:** February 5, 7: 30 pm **Admission:** 50 – 380 yuan **Tel:** 6559 8285

Traditional Music for Spring

Renowned traditional Chinese musical artists Zhang Weiliang, Wu Bexia, Wang Yong and his band, Nuzi Shier Yuefang join new age singer Zhu Zheqin to perform their signature works. Accompanied by the Chi-

Jams

Flamenco Rock

Join the band Flamenco and Xinjiang rock star Arken for an evening of flamenco music and rock.

Where: Jam House, Dongdaqiao Xiejie **When:** January 30, 31, 10 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6506 3845

Live from Germany

German DJ Hans plays a wide-ranging night of music from soul to funk to acid jazz and more.

Where: Loup Chante, 38 Chengfu Shiweiyang **When:** January 30, 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6276 7355

Hip Hop & Reggae

Join DJ S-Press for a dancing evening of hip hop, R & B, Reggae, Ragga and other danceable tunes.

Where: Club Deep, Worker's Stadium south gate, inside the swimming pool yard, between Cana 33 and Wudai **When:** January 30 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6504 6967

Here from U.K.

DJ Chozie from the UK plays at The Loft, on their newly revamped sound system.

Where: The Loft, 4 Gongti Beilu **When:** January 30 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6501 7501

nese Radio and Broadcast National Orchestra, the evening's concert is directed by Peng Jiapeng.

Where: Beijing Exhibition Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** February 1, 7: 30 pm **Admission:** 80 – 600 yuan **Tel:** 6835 4455



Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet

China Philharmonic Orchestra brings to Beijing Russian composer Sergei Prokofiev's Romeo and Juliet.

Where: Poly Theater, 1/F Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** January 31, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80 – 680 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188

Activities

Picnic on the Great Wall

Starting from a valley, this hike follows a mountain trail going up to the Wall. The walk will follow a nice trail on the Wall, up to a high point that makes a perfect lunch spot. Panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and the Mutanyu portion of the Great Wall are guaranteed. On the way to the top tower, ropes will guide hikers on the steep path.

Where: pick up at Lido Hotel, outside Starbucks **When:** February 1, 8:30 am – 5 pm **Admission:** 200 yuan **Tel:** 13910025516

YPHH Goes Skiing at Nanshan

All arrangements have been made to rent: skis, snowboards, boots and suits (if necessary). A special team of guides and coaches awaits. Following a western-style lunch at the Pavilion (soft drinks and beer are included, the rest is BYO), last descent will be at 4pm.

Where: pick up at Worker's Stadium **When:** February 7, 7:30 am **Admission:** 450 yuan **Tel:** 6430 1412



We welcome your feedback. We will print employment, language exchange and accommodation info for individuals. Feel free to email us at bjtodayinfo@ynet.com or call 6590 2521.

Dong Nan

Stage

Contemporary German Theater

The People's Art Experimental Theater joins the Goethe Institute to present Lederfresse, a representative piece of contemporary German Theater. The performance is brought to you by: the Lin Zhaohua studio, the Central Theater Academy and the Beijing Film Academy.

Where: People's Art Experimental Theater, 3/F Capital Theatre, 22 Wangfujing Dajie **When:** January 30, 31 7:15pm **Admission:** 30 yuan (students), 80 yuan **Tel:** 6526 3337



Qu Opera

Adopted from renowned novelist and dramatist Lao She's novel Zhenghongqi Xia (Under the Red Flag), this show narrates not only the history of Lao She's family but also recaptures the people and habits of Beijing at the turn of the last century.

Where: Ethnic Cultural Palace Theater, 49 Fuxingmennei Dajie, Xicheng District **When:** February 1 – 3, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 100 – 280 yuan **Tel:** 6605 2404

Children's Drama

An old saying of long ago recounts that whoever finds a malan flower will be the most fortunate person (or animal) in the forest. Malan Flower (Malan Hua) is a delightful children's drama piece.

Where: Poly Theater, 1/F Poly Plaza, 14 Dongzhimen Nandajie **When:** February 4 – 6, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 40 – 280 yuan **Tel:** 6500 1188



Contemporary Urban Drama

Xiangchi Mahua Xian Gei Ni Ning (If You Want to Eat Mahua, I Can Make You Now) is a light-hearted comedy which spoofs the story of Faust. The story of a clerk pledging his soul to the devil includes a critical look at many phenomena in today's society. Starring He Jiong, Yu Na and Xie Na.

Where: Yifu Theater, Central Academy of Drama **When:** till February 20, 7: 30pm **Admission:** 180 yuan **Tel:** 6401 3959

Contemporary Drama

Nanren de Zibai (The Confession of a Man) tells the absurd story of an intellectual couple, exploring the relation between power and feeling. Directed by Re Ming, the play stars Feng Yuanzheng and Liang Danni.

Where: People's Art Theater, 22 Wangfujing Dajie (behind Capital Theater) **When:** January 30, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 100 yuan **Tel:** 6525 0123

Drama about Li Bai

Li Bai, one of China's great poets, has a different impression of today's people as he did in his own time. Exploring his inner psychological world, Li Bai appears to move between the worlds of art and the official court. Directed by Su Min, this play stars Pu Cunxin.

Where: Capital Theater, 22 Wangfujing Dajie **When:** till February 8 12, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 80 – 280 yuan **Tel:** 6524 9847

Exhibitions



Modern Oil Painting Exhibition

This spring show features the diverse styles of Xiao Hong, Pang Yongjie, Bai Xincheng Yangchun Baixue and Feng Feng.

Where: Qin Gallery, 1-1E Enjoy Paradise, Huaweili, north of Beijing Curio City, Chaoyang District **When:** February 1 – 29, daily 9:30 am – 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0458



Beautiful Butterflies

See over 300 specimens of rare butterflies in this new exhibit. Symbolizing beauty and love for the Chinese, this show gets the new year off to an auspicious start.

Where: Beijing Natural History Museum, No. 126, Tiaoyao Nan Dajie **When:** till March 20, 8:30 am – 5 pm **Admission:** 10 yuan for children, 15 yuan for adults. **Tel:** 6702 4431

Pingyao is a small town in the center of Shanxi Province, about 80 kilometers south of Taiyuan. The old section of the town is surrounded by a completely intact city wall, and contains scores of well preserved buildings dating back to the Ming and Qing dynasties. The wall, built in 1370 during the Ming Dynasty, is 6.4 kilometers in circumference, with six main gates and 94 watch towers.

Pingyao Promenade



Entrances to courtyard houses are invariably decorated with red chunlian.

By Ian Provan

Any foreign friend who has done a bit of traveling in China will be familiar with the “hello!” thing. It can be broken down into two categories: “hello!” – meaning “Look, a foreigner ... !” usually said by someone outside the target’s direct line of sight, and “hello!” – meaning, well, “hello” in the traditional sense.

Of course, the phenomenon is a little more complex than that, and there is often considerable overlap between the two, but this is a travel piece after all, not an op. ed.

The point is, in Pingyao, these oh-so-frequently uttered “hello!”s most of the time mean just that. And most of the time, they are said to the target’s face, with eye contact, which is nice.

Now admittedly, a responding “hello!” invariably provokes shrieks of laughter from the kid who precipitated the exchange and his or her mates (they generally tend to be kids), but it is friendly, happy laughter.

Ming and Qing allure

Since the listing of the entire old town as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997, tourism has become Pingyao’s fastest growing industry, attracting a growing tide of backpackers. Three years ago there were two traditional courtyard-style hotels in the old town, both on the main street, Nan Dajie. Now there are several dozen.

Although not yet a backpacker haven in the sense of places like Dali and Yangshuo, Pingyao seems to be heading that way rapidly. This is hardly surprising, given the combined allure of inexpensive accommodation options in gorgeous, Ming and Qing courtyard houses, the many sight-seeing possibilities in and around the town and, of course,

those delicious Shanxi noodles.

The peak tourist season is between Chun Jie (Spring Festival) and Lantern Festival, which this year falls on February 5. Every household marks the occasion by putting up new *chunlian*, red Spring Festival couplets pasted on either side of the doorway, unless there has recently been a death in the family, in which case the festive red is substituted for a more somber blue.

The other busy period is in September, during the Pingyao International Photography Festival. Started in 2001, the festival attracts a growing number of photographers and photographic enthusiasts every year. As well as raising the profile of Pingyao and bringing an increase in tourism revenue, the festival has also had the no doubt unintended effect of acclimatizing the locals to hordes of camera-wielding tourists.

This makes Pingyao one of those rare places where one can wander around with a camera, snapping away to one’s heart’s content, attracting almost no attention what-so-ever. Apart from the occasional “hello!” of course.

City sights

Pingyao is small enough that you can pretty much cover the whole town on foot, although there is no shortage of pedi-cabs for the weary.

The City Tower, also known as the Golden Well Tower, in the center of town on Nan Dajie (admission 5 yuan) is the tallest structure in town and offers a great view of the gray slate rooftops of the courtyard houses.

There are also various museums, including the Rishengchang Bank Museum in Xi Dajie, the Tianjixiang Museum (Furniture Museum) in Nan Dajie and the former town

government offices on Yamen Jie, all worth a look.

In the neighborhood

Pingyao makes an ideal base for checking out some of the many architectural sites for which Shanxi is famous. There are many villages and towns nearby that do not receive as much publicity as Pingyao, containing some real treasures. Probably the easiest way of getting to them is to ask staff at your hotel to organize a taxi.

Best known of these nearby sights is the courtyard of the Qiao family (Qiao jia dayuan). Built during the Qing Dynasty by a tea and beancurd merchant, this six-courtyard complex was used as the set for Zhang Yimou’s film, *Raise the Red Lantern*.

Other nearby sights worth considering include:

Shuanglin monastery (双林寺), in Qiaotou village, about seven kilometers from Pingyao. It was founded in 571, during the Northern Wei Dynasty, and houses a large collection of clay figurines from the Song, Yuan, Ming and Qing dynasties. There are three courtyards containing various halls, and a drum and bell tower.

Zhenguo Monastery (镇国寺), in Haodong village, Pingyao County. The main building, the Hall of Multiple Buddhas, dates back to 936, during the Five Dynasties Period.

Cixiang Monastery (慈祥寺), Jigou village, Pingyao County. The monastery’s Hall of Three Buddhas was built during the Song Dynasty, and the Lutai Pagoda during the Jin.

Slightly further afield, in Taigu County, are Wubian Monastery, which features a seven-storey white pagoda built in 1090, during the Song Dynasty, Yuanzhi Monastery, Jingxin Monastery and the residential courtyard of Kong Xiangxi.

Places to stay:

Although more and more hotels seem to be opening all the time in Pingyao, it is still a good idea to book if you plan to stay on a Saturday night, or during the Spring Festival, May Day or National Day holiday weeks, or during the photography festival.

Yide Hotel, situated in a quiet little blind alley five minute’s walk from Nan Dajie, is a beautifully renovated courtyard house built by a wealthy merchant during the reign of Emperor Qianlong (1736-1795).

All rooms have bathrooms and large *kang*-style beds that are heated in winter. Double rooms are 180-220 yuan, but discounts may apply during the off season.

Where: 16 Shaxiang Jie (Sand Lane Street)

Tel: (0354) 568 5988

Jinjinglou Bilingual, on Nan Dajie, offers budget accommodation, with double rooms with shared bathrooms starting from 60 yuan.

Where: 29 Nan Dajie

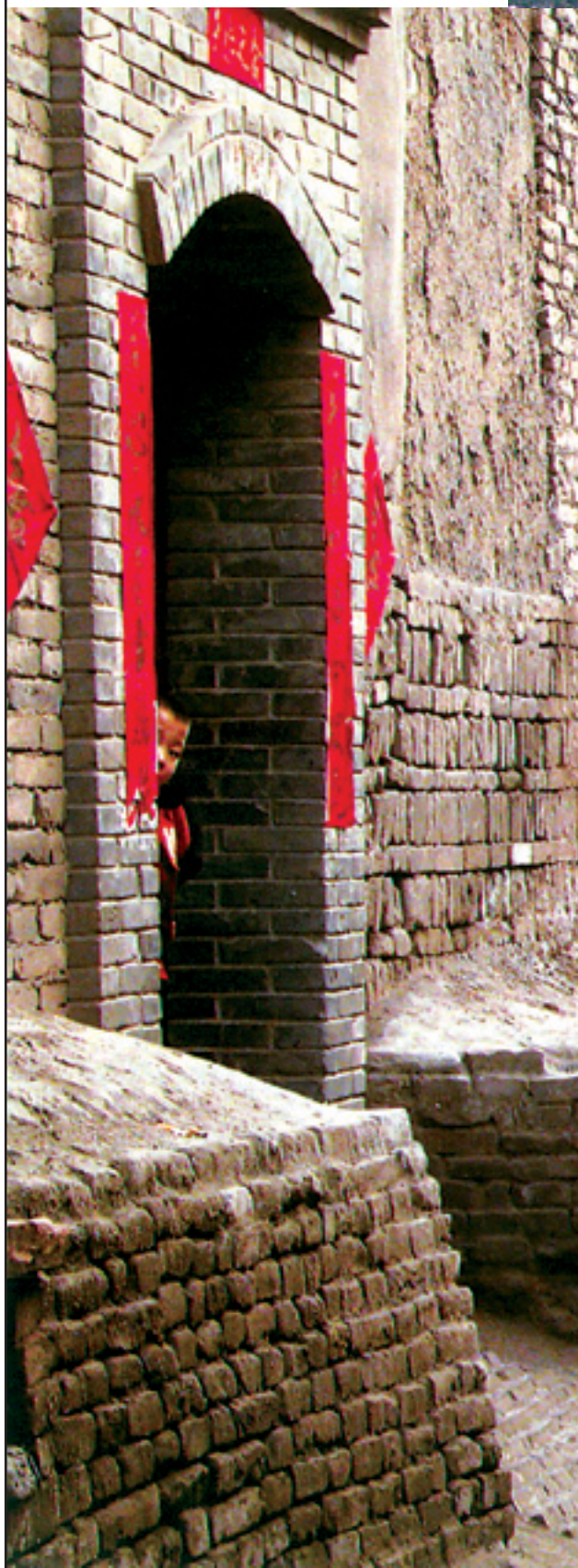
Tel: (0354) 568 3751

Getting there:

Although it seems mathematically improbable, there is one train daily from Beijing to Pingyao and two coming back. Train No. 4405 leaves Beijing West Railway Station at around 9:10 pm, arriving at Pingyao at 7:30 next morning. If you book into a hotel in the old town, they generally arrange for a taxi to collect you from the station.

Leaving Pingyao for Beijing, there is one train at 8:30 and another at 10:30 pm, arriving next morning around 6:30 and 8:30 respectively.

Most of the hotels seem to be able to organize train tickets, providing you give them a few days notice.



Photos by Ian Provan